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Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Fifth periodic report of States parties

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland*

* For the initial report submitted by the Government of the United Kingdom, see CEDAW/C/5/Add.52, which was considered by the Committee at its ninth session; for the second periodic report, see CEDAW/C/UK/2, which was considered by the Committee at its twelfth session; for the third periodic report, see CEDAW/C/UK/3 and Add.1 and 2, which was considered by the Committee at its twenty-first session; for the fourth periodic report, see CEDAW/C/UK/4 and Add.1-4, which was considered by the Committee at its twenty-first session.
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UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN (CEDAW)

5TH PERIODIC REPORT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

June 2003

Table of contents

I. Foreword x

II. Introduction xi

III. Reservations to the Convention xii

IV. Institutions promoting the advancement of women and gender equality xii
Women and Equality Unit xii
Women's National Commission xiii
Equal Opportunities Commission xiii
Single Equality Body – the project xiv
Equality Commission for Northern Ireland xiv

V. Devolution experience xiv
Northern Ireland xiv
Scotland xv
Wales xvii

Article 1: Elimination of discrimination 1

Article 2: Obligations to eliminate discrimination 1
Legislation introduced or amended since the last report 1
Forthcoming legislation 6
Legislation and other measures eliminating discrimination targeting specific groups 7
Women with a disability 7
Sexual orientation and civil partnerships 8
Implementation of the law 9
Women offenders 10

Article 3: The development and advancement of women 12
Measures taken to alleviate women's poverty 12
Minority ethnic women 14
International development 15

Article 4: Acceleration of equality between women and men 17
Elections 17

Article 5: Sex roles and stereotyping 17
Sex roles and stereotyping 17
Education 18
Women in Science, Engineering and Technology 18
Women in Information Technology, Electronics and Communications (ITEC) 19
The media 19
Portrayal of women in advertising 19
The Internet 21

Article 6: Exploitation of women 21
Prostitution and trafficking in women 21

Article 7: Political and public life **22**
Women in political life 22
Women in public appointments 23
Northern Ireland 25
Scotland 25
Wales 26
Trade Unions 27
The Civil Service 27
Northern Ireland 28
Scotland 28
Wales 28

Article 8: Women as international representatives **29**
The Diplomatic Service 29
Women's role in defence 29

Article 9: Nationality **30**
Immigration rules concerning marriage 30
Refugees 30

Article 10: Education **31**
Sure Start 32
Early education 32
School (5-16 years of age) 33
National curriculum assessment arrangements 33
Higher education 34
Career and education guidance 35
The role of Connexions 35
Teenage pregnancy strategy 35
Sexual health and reproductive education 36
Financial support 36
International comparison 37
Status of women teachers 37
Continuing education 38

Northern Ireland 38
Examination achievements 39
Initiatives to improve education standards 39
Women teachers 39
Further and higher education 40
School age mothers 40
Scotland 40
Attainment 41
Child poverty package for lone parents 41
Wales 42
Attainment 42
Teachers 42

Article 11: Employment **43**
Women's participation in the labour market 43
Family-friendly employment policies 43

Maternity rights 45
Childcare 45
Pay 45
New Deal for Lone Parents 46
Women in business 47
Older women in employment 48
Women with disabilities 48
Unpaid work 49
Health and safety at work 49
Women migrant workers 49

Northern Ireland 49
Childcare 49
Women in business 50
Public sector training programmes 50
Scotland 50
Childcare 50
Women in business 51
Wales 52
Childcare 52
Women in business 52

Article 12: Women's health 52
Family planning services 53
Teenage pregnancy 53
Maternity services 54
Abortion in the UK 55
Abortion in Northern Ireland 55
Sexual Health and HIV/AIDS 55
Female Genital Mutilation 56
Circulatory system/Heart disease 56
Cardiovascular disease and cancer prevention 57
Breastfeeding 57
Cancer screening 57
Diabetes 58
Sickle cell anaemia 58
Mental health 58
Drugs and alcohol 59
Older women 59

Northern Ireland 59
Cancer 59
Breastfeeding 60
Sexual health 60
Family planning 60
Teenage pregnancy and parenthood 60
Scotland 61
Teenage pregnancy 61
Sexual health 62
Wales 62
Family planning services and sexual health 62

Maternity services 63
Breastfeeding 63
Cancer 63

Article 13: Social and economic benefits 64
The Social Welfare system 64
Benefits for mothers 64
Tax and family benefits 65
Help for poorest pensioners 68
Northern Ireland 70
Scotland 70
Wales 70

Travel and crime 71
Northern Ireland 72
Scotland 72
Wales 72

Article 14: Rural women 73
Institutions in rural UK 73
Equal opportunities for women in rural areas 73
Rural transport 73
Childcare in rural areas 74
Rural Development 74
Northern Ireland 75
Scotland 75
Wales 76
The environment 76

Article 15: Equality before the law and civil matters 76
Judicial appointments 76
Legal aid 78
Support for court users 78

Article 16: Equality in marriage and family law 79
Divorce law 79
Violence against women 80
Crime reduction programme 83
Criminal justice procedures 83
Rape and sexual assault 83
Trafficking in women 84
Northern Ireland 84
Violence against women 84
Legislation 85
Criminal justice 85
Support for victims 86
Scotland 86
Family law act 86
Violence against women 87
Refuge development programme 87

Raising public awareness 87
Scottish strategy for victims 88
Wales 88
Domestic violence and violence against women 88
Support for victims 89
Publications 89
Refuge provision 89

Annexes*

Annex 1: Further information on Government action to eliminate discrimination against women

Article 2
Women offenders

Article 7
The Civil Service

Article 10
Continuing education

Article 11
Disabled women and men at work
Health and safety at work

Article 12
Women's health

Annex 2: Tables and Figures

Article 2
2.1 Cases brought and concluded under the Sex Discrimination Act in Great Britain 2000-2002
2.2 Cases brought and concluded under the Equal Pay Act in Great Britain 2000-2002
2.3 Cases brought under the Sex Discrimination and Equal Pay Acts in Northern Ireland Industrial Tribunals between January 1999 and March 2002
2.4 Cases brought under the Sex Discrimination and Equal Pay Act in Northern Irelands Industrial Tribunals January 1999 and March 2002.

Article 7
7.1 Public appointments held by women in the UK between 1992-2001
7.2 Public appointments held by ethnic minority women in the UK between 1992 and 2001
7.3 Women in grades below Senior Civil Service (%) in the UK non-industrial Civil Service: 1997 – 2001
7.4 2001/2002 benchmarking scores
7.5 Gender breakdown in senior positions in unitary authorities in Wales

Article 8
8.1 Representation of women in the UK Armed Forces at April 1990 and April 2002
8.2 Total Strength of UK Regular Forces by gender
8.3 Intake from civilian life to UK Regular Forces by gender

* Annexes referred to in this document will be provided in English only to CEDAW experts for reference purposes.

Article 10

10.1 Examination achievements of pupils in their last year of compulsory education in the UK, 1995/96 and 2000/01
10.2 Higher Education Students by mode and gender between 1970/71 and 2001/02
10.3 Women as a proportion of all students in full and part-time higher education courses in the UK: 1992/93 and 2001/02
10.4 Numbers of men and women gaining higher education qualifications in UK undergraduate and postgraduate courses
10.5 Examination Results of students obtaining first-degree qualifications by gender and mode of study 2000/01
10.6 Grade of teachers in the maintained schools sector, 1998, 1999 and 2000
10.7 New entrants to the maintained schools sector in 1999-2000.

Article 11

11.1 Value of household production in the UK: 2000
11.2 Total time (primary & secondary activities & passive care) spent in household production and all other activities: 2000

Article 12

12.1 Under 18/under 16 conceptions
12.2 Prevalence of smoking in pregnancy, England 2000
12.3 Prevalence of cigarette smoking by sex and age: persons aged 16 and over, in England, 2000
12.4 Number of people setting a quit date through NHS Smoking Cessation Services
12.5 Prevalence of cigarette smoking by sex and socio-economic group
12.6 Prevalence of use of tobacco products by ethnic minorities
12.7 Reports of AIDS diagnoses in the UK 1998-2002
12.8 Reports of HIV diagnoses in the UK 1998-2001

Article 15

15.1 Men and women in the judiciary in England and Wales, including percentage of women to men: 1994/1997/2002
15.2 Legal aid

Article 16

16.1 Women proceeded against at the magistrates' courts and found guilty at all courts for different offence groups, England and Wales 2000
16.2 Whether victim told anyone about last incident of sexual victimization experienced since age 16, by type of attack

Annex 3: List of acronyms

I. FOREWORD

The Labour Government, now in its second term, continues to promote the advancement of women and gender equality as a big part of our commitment to ensure a society and an economy where women can play a full role, where their contributions are acknowledged and valued, where they can make choices about their lives and where they can live free from fear of violence. The UK's fifth periodic report on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women covers the period between 1999 and 2003.

On the dawn of this millennium we can look back at some major achievements in promoting the advancement of women and gender equality. The bigger picture is distinctly more favourable for women in 2003 than it has been at any time before. The UK Government has made enormous strides by promoting gender equality in employment, education, health, economic and social policy, as well as tackling violence against women. At the same time, we acknowledge that women in the UK still face a number of challenges. There is more to do.

The present report illustrates how the UK Government has taken this process forward in the last four years, placing the needs of women at the heart of policy-making and public service delivery.

In doing so, we have underlined our commitment to strengthening the foundations of a society, where women can access and benefit from opportunities on an equal footing with men.

Patricia Hewitt
Secretary of State, Department of Trade and Industry
Minister for Women

Jacqui Smith
Minister of State for Industry and the Regions
Deputy Minister for Women and Equality

II. INTRODUCTION

1. The Government considers the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women a critical instrument for the advancement of women and gender equality. The UK signed the Convention in 1981 and ratified it in April 1986. In accordance with article 18 of the Convention, the UK undertakes to submit reports to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women every four years, on the measures adopted to give effect to the Convention. The Committee considered the UK's third and fourth periodic reports (CEDAW/C/UK/3 and CEDAW/C/UK/4) at its 429th and 430th meetings, on 10 June 1999. Following consideration of these reports the Committee issued a number of concluding comments (A/54/38/Rev.1) that were widely disseminated across Government.

2. While across the UK, the gender equality agenda shares the common goal of eliminating discrimination against women, in the devolved administrations, the gender equality agenda is, to varying degrees, largely addressed at the regional level with the aim to take into account the local needs and priorities. Indeed, the devolution process, still in its infancy, has brought many benefits to women. The devolution experience is illustrated in section (v), as well as throughout the articles of this report.

3. The report was compiled by the Women and Equality Unit in close partnership with other Government departments and the devolved administrations of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Extensive collaboration between Government departments and devolved administrations was a high priority during the drafting phase of the report, reflecting the cross-cutting nature of gender issues.

4. The Government also places great value on incorporating women's views into the report. For this reason, women's NGOs, through the Women's National Commission, as well as the Equal Opportunities Commission, the Equality Commission in Northern Ireland, and the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, were extensively consulted during the drafting phase of the report.

5. In light of the page limit (70 pages) for periodic reports, the baseline information on the Government measures to eliminate discrimination against women is not included. We encourage the reader to refer to the previous UK reports[1] on the implementation of the Convention to obtain a comprehensive picture of the Government's actions to meet its obligations under the Convention. The present report focuses on the most significant measures adopted by the Government since 1999 to eliminate discrimination against women in the UK, including measures adopted to address the Committee's concluding comments (A/54/38/Rev.1). Due to the page limit the report does not illustrate all measures implemented by the Government in this field between 1999 and 2003.

6. The report outlines the legislative, judicial and administrative measures that the UK Government has adopted, between 1999 and 2003, to give effect to the Convention, as well as follow-up to the concluding comments (A/54/38/Rev.1) of the Committee. The report is structured following the articles of the Convention and covers new measures across Government as well as new and planned legislation aimed at eliminating discrimination against women.

7. The UK Government[2] has continued to make progress for the advancement of women and gender equality by introducing legislative and non-legislative measures in employment rights, childcare, education, health, civil partnerships, political and public life, social and economic policy, as well as reducing violence against women. In taking forward this process, the Women and Equality Unit in the Department of Trade and Industry has supported the Ministers for Women raising issues that affect women across the Government's agenda.

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[1] UK initial report and subsequent periodic reports on the implementation of the Convention.

[2] The UK Government is referred to as the 'Government' in the following pages.

8. The UK is fully committed to the follow-up to the Beijing Platform for Action — specifically the actions to be taken in regard to the 12 critical areas of concern identified in the Platform — as well as the further actions and initiatives to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action agreed by the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century" (referred to as Beijing+5), in June 2000. In the UK, the promotion of gender equality through legislative and non-legislative means, as described in this report, fall within the framework of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Beijing+5 outcome document. It should be noted that as part of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly preparations, the UK published a document entitled '*Equality in Practice*', highlighting UK key domestic and international achievements for the advancement of women.

9. The Government recognizes that women in the UK still face a number of challenges. Continued compliance with the Convention and a determination to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women are themes running through UK Government policy aimed at removing any obstacles to women's equal opportunities with men. In this context, the Government will continue to work in partnership with civil society towards the goals set out in the Convention.

III. RESERVATIONS TO THE CONVENTION

10. On 7 March 2002, the Government announced a review of the UK's position under various international human rights instruments. In accordance with the United Nation's request to review all reservations to the Convention, the Government is reviewing the UK reservations, as well as the CEDAW Optional Protocol, as part of this exercise. NGOs have been consulted on their views about the UK signing the Optional Protocol. The Government will report on the outcome of this review in summer 2003. For details of reservations made by the Government see the UK's fourth periodic report on the Convention (p. 22).

IV. INSTITUTIONS PROMOTING THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY

Women and Equality Unit (WEU)

11. The Women and Equality Unit has lead responsibility within Government for policy on women, gender equality, sexual orientation and the co-ordination of equality. It also provides support across the Department for Trade and Industry (DTI) in ensuring that equality is integral to the development and delivery of the department's policies and services. The Ministers for Women, Patricia Hewitt, Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and Jacqui Smith, Minister of State for Industry and the Regions and Deputy Minister for Women and Equality, supported by the Women and Equality Unit, lead on gender equality in Government. Jacqui Smith also has specific responsibility for equality in relation to sexual orientation and equality co-ordination across Government. Baroness Scotland is spokesperson for equality in the House of Lords. Ministers and officials also work with devolved administrations on areas of joint responsibility.

12. The aim of the Unit is to reduce and remove barriers to opportunity for all. WEU works with officials across Government to bring about measurable improvements in the position of women that benefit society generally and promote equality for all, particularly in the development and delivery of Government policy and services. Specific roles include:

- Leading the development of a more integrated approach across Government and its bodies on equality to increase opportunities for all.
- Leading on legislation and sponsoring other bodies (the Equal Opportunities Commission and Women's National Commission) in the equality areas where WEU has policy lead within Government.
- Undertaking specific projects solely or in partnership, where the WEU takes an interest in an area, function, topic to identify issues and policy.

- Evaluating the impact of policies and contributing to redesign/new policies.

Tools for gender mainstreaming across Government

13. Gender mainstreaming is central to the Government's efforts to improve policies and public services. The WEU has developed two easy-to-use gender mainstreaming tools, *Gender Impact Assessments* and *Diversity, Policy and Services*, that put people at the heart of policy-making, and lead to better Government by making diversity issues visible in the mainstream of society. They provide a methodology for policy makers to assess whether their policies will deliver equality of opportunity across the board, and help to challenge policy makers to question the assumption that policies and services affect everyone in the same way. The Government is working to apply Equality Impact Assessments to legislation, policy plans and programmes, budgets, reports and existing policies and services. The Government recognises that such assessments should be done at an early stage in the decision making process so that policies can be changed – or even scrapped — if necessary. The gender mainstreaming tool is widely disseminated through the internet (http://www.womenandequalityunit.gov.uk/equality/policy_making.htm).

14. The Government has committed itself to reducing gender inequalities in the first ever gender equality Public Service Agreement (PSA) objective announced last year: "*By 2006, working with all departments, the Government will work to bring about measurable improvements in gender equality across a range of indicators, as part of our objectives on equality and social inclusion*". This objective is supported by specific targets and initiatives across Government, which the Ministers for Women believe are key to delivering improvements in gender equality. These are set out in the document *Delivering on Gender Equality*, published in June 2003. These targets cover areas including childcare, equal pay, flexible working, public appointments and domestic violence. The Women and Equality Unit will work with Departments to help in the delivery process and will report on progress throughout the Spending Review period (2003-06). *Delivering on Gender Equality* also sets out the broader context of work going on right across Government to make a positive impact on gender equality: including skills, training, education, ill health, and transport. The breadth of these initiatives shows that gender mainstreaming has begun to become a reality in many key Departments.

Women's National Commission (WNC)

15. The WNC was set up more than 30 years ago as the official, independent advisory body giving the views of women to Government. It is an Advisory Non Departmental Public Body (NDPB), fully funded by Government, but is able to comment freely on government policy. The WNC has an expanded membership of over 230 women's organisations covering the whole of the UK, representing a unique vehicle for presenting women's views, needs, concerns and priorities to the Government. Since the submission of the UK's fourth periodic report on the Convention and 'shadow' reports, the WNC has undergone a major re-organisation. The WNC now agrees its annual work programme with the Minister for Women and will be held accountable to the Minister for the achievement of targets and objectives; has a Chair and Steering Group who are appointed as part of the national Public Appointment system to ensure fairness and transparency. The WNC is located in the Department for Trade and Industry alongside the Women and Equality Unit, to support the Minister for Women. The WNC is able to liaise with, and is consulted by, the Unit as well as other Government Departments.

Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC)

16. The Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) is the lead agency working to eliminate sex discrimination in Britain. The organisation was established under the Sex Discrimination Act in 1975. It was set up as an independent statutory body with the following powers to:

- work towards the elimination of discrimination on the grounds of sex or marriage;
- promote equality of opportunity for women and men;
- keep the Sex Discrimination Act and the Equal Pay Act under review;

- provide legal advice and assistance to individuals who have been discriminated against.

The EOC is a Non-Departmental Public Body funded through grant-in-aid. Its sponsor department is the Women and Equality Unit at the Department for Trade and Industry. Although independent of Government, the EOC is responsible to the Minister for Women. It has separate offices in Scotland and Wales.

Single Equality Body — the project

17. Following the consultation document *Towards Equality and Diversity*, published in December 2001, the Government could see arguments in the longer term in favour of a single statutory commission. The project has stimulated a lively debate both on the principles that underpin UK equality institutions and future options. The Equality Institutions Review is the most significant review of equality in over a quarter of a century. It is centred on looking at long-term options for the priorities and role of equality institutions in Great Britain. The initial phase of this project was completed in October 2002, with the publication of a consultation document entitled *Equality and Diversity: Making it Happen.* The consultation document set out the Government's assessment of the priorities for equality and the challenges ahead. It looked at what equality institutions could contribute to making the Government's vision of equality a reality, invited views on possible structures for the future and looked at a number of cross-cutting issues that the Government will address. These include the relationship between equality and human rights; devolved, regional and local issues; and the relationship between promotion and enforcement. The Department for Trade and Industry has published *Equality and Diversity: the way ahead* alongside this consultation process. This document details the results of the consultation from December 2002, and offered stakeholders an opportunity to comment on the draft regulations that will implement the *EC Race* and *Employment Directives*. Through implementing these EC Directives (see article 2), the Government aims to develop effective legislation that will have a real impact in removing unfair discrimination.

Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI)

18. The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI) is a non-departmental public body established under the Northern Ireland Act 1998. The Commission works to eliminate unlawful discrimination, promote equality of opportunity for all and encourage good practice. The Commission has been given a wide range of powers and responsibilities, including advising and assisting complainants, investigation and enforcement, awareness raising and review of equality legislation.

V. DEVOLUTION EXPERIENCE

Northern Ireland

19. In the *Good Friday Agreement*, the Northern Ireland political parties affirmed the right of women to full and equal political participation. Moreover, the *Programme for Government in Northern Ireland* (PfG) provides a sound basis to deliver the Government's actions and commitments that include the promotion of equality of opportunity, good community relations, and the protection of human rights. Following suspension of the devolved administration in Northern Ireland on 14 October 2002, which included suspension of the Assembly the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland appointed two additional Junior Ministers to his team at the Northern Ireland Office, to assist in the work of overseeing the formerly devolved institutions. The Government is continuing to implement the PfG previously agreed by the Executive and the Assembly for the 2002-03 financial year. It has also published its priorities and plans for 2003-06 and these build on the progress made by the Executive across a wide range of areas including the wider equality agenda.

20. The PfG specifically commits the Office Of the First and Deputy First Minister to bringing forward and implementing cross-departmental Gender and Race strategies during 2003. The Northern Ireland Race Equality

Strategy along with the Response to the Recommendations of the Promoting Social Inclusion Working Group Report on Travellers, were launched on 25th February 2003. The final strategies will be published before the end of 2003. Both will tackle issues of women, with the Race Strategy placing specific emphasis on those of ethnic minority and traveller women.

Single Equality Bill

21. The development and introduction of a *Single Equality Bill* is another important element of the Northern Ireland equality agenda. The Programme for Government attaches a high priority to this work and the current administration has signalled that it is committed to building on the progress already achieved to develop and harmonise anti-discrimination legislation as far as practicable (see article 2 for details).

Statutory Duty

22. Under section 75 of the *Northern Ireland Act 1998*, there is a requirement on public authorities to promote equality of opportunity across a number of social categories that include women. Relevant existing and new policies are subject to an equality impact assessment, aimed at identifying any adverse differential impact on women and men, and consider ways of either avoiding or mitigating the effect. In addition, public authorities are required to promote good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion and racial group. The statutory equality obligations are implemented through Equality Schemes, approved by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, and by public authorities carrying out and consulting on equality impact assessments (EQIAs) of relevant policies. Policies for EQIA are selected by applying criteria tests devised by the Equality Commission's *Guide to the Statutory Duties*.

23. See *Equality Commission Northern Ireland* above.

Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission

24. Northern Ireland has a body concentrating on international human rights standards, the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC). The Commission was established by the Northern Ireland Act 1998, with duties and powers including individual casework and providing advice to Government on the protection of human rights. In line with the Paris Principles, it has several roles in relation to the monitoring of the many human rights treaties to which the UK is party, including CEDAW.

25. Details (including legislation) of Northern Ireland's experience for promoting gender equality are specified in the articles that follow.

Scotland

26. The Equality Unit was set up to co-ordinate the delivery and implementation of the Equality Strategy and to develop the equality work of the Scottish Executive. Its main job is to promote and extend ownership of equality issues throughout the Executive and to champion the interests of equality groups. It is a source of advice and guidance about equality issues. The Unit is in close touch with the Scotland Office to ensure views of the Scottish Ministers are fed into considerations about reserved matters relating to equal opportunities.

27. The Scottish Parliament, as a key principle, recognises the need to promote equal opportunities for all in its operation and its appointments. This commitment to equal opportunities underpins the work of the Parliament. Under the Parliament's Standing Orders all legislation proposed by the Executive must be accompanied by a statement of its impact on equal opportunities. The Scottish Parliament set up the Equal Opportunities Committee as one of its mandatory standing committees. The Committee has undertaken a range of important investigations and provides continuous scrutiny of the Executive and Parliament's activities on equality. Ministers and officials have appeared frequently before the Equal Opportunities Committee to give evidence on

equality matters. Two Cross Party Groups on major issues affecting women have also been established. These are:

- Cross Party Group on Women – the purpose of the group is to act as a policy forum for discussion on policy impacts on women; to share information and expertise on women and gender between Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs); to maximise information and expertise from external sources, including Equal Opportunity Commission Scotland, and other statutory, public and voluntary equality organisations that support the aims of this group; to act as a forum for networking and support, led by women MSP.

- Cross Party Group on Men's Violence Against Women and Children — the purpose of the group is to establish a forum for debate on the issue of men's violence against women and children. It is intended that the remit be broad enough to include the issues of rape, domestic violence, physical and emotional and sexual abuse. The work of the group will focus on prevention, protection and provision.

Mainstreaming Equality in Scotland

28. The Government recognises that mainstreaming equality is a long-term process. During phase 1 (2000–02) of the Scottish *Equality Strategy* the Government concentrated on improving the collection, analysis and dissemination of data and information disaggregated by sex, increasing consultation and dialogue with equality groups, raising awareness on equality issues and developing the processes to facilitate gender mainstreaming in policy and spending plans. The Executive will continue to support the Glasgow Women's Library and engender groups to develop the database of women's contacts across Scotland. This will enable information to be disseminated widely and provide a basis for consultation with women in future. Furthermore, the Executive made a £150,000 grant to the Women's Fund for Scotland in 2002-03 to assist organisations in local areas to support projects that promote the social welfare and capacity building of women in their own communities. A range of groups and organisations has been assisted across Scotland. An additional £450,000 will be awarded over the next three years.

Consultation with Women and Women's Organisations

29. A series of local consultative events were held during 2002. These combined information on how to input to the Parliament and to the Executive with a focus on a topical issue. Consultations with women focused on education (held with women from ethnic minority communities), equal pay and employment, rural women's issues, and poverty. Another example of the Scottish Executive's work in this area is the collaboration with women's organisations (in Fife) during 2001-02 aimed at developing a local consultation project with local organisations, groups and women to identify their concerns and priorities.

Women's Convention

30. Following a review of the existing opportunities for women's organisations in Scotland to provide a strategic input into the work of the Scottish Executive and Parliament and to network with each other, the Scottish Executive announced on 10 March 2003 that it would provide funding for the establishment of a new Women's Convention to strengthen the structure for women's organisations in Scotland. The Convention will build on the network of organisations in the Women's Consultative Forum. The Convention will have a steering group comprising a number of key Scottish women's organisations. The steering group will establish a number of working commissions on key topics of relevance to women and linked to the work of the Executive and Parliament. These commissions will draw on the expertise of women across Scotland in these fields and develop effective liaison with the relevant Scottish Executive officials and key institutions. The Executive will continue to hold events for women's organisations and is also supporting a *Delivering for Change Programme*

For Women, drawing on the specific recommendations of the Women's Strategic Group, chaired by Scotland's first woman university principal[3].

31. Details (including legislation) of Scotland's experience for promoting gender equality are specified in the articles that follow.

Wales[4]

32. The establishment of the Assembly provided an opportunity to move equality matters forward due to its statutory obligations to equality under the *Government of Wales Act 1998*. The Welsh Assembly Government set up a system of consultation that comprises three Partnership Councils for Local Government and statutory bodies, Business and Commerce, and the Voluntary Sector. The Council for the Voluntary Sector includes a representative on Gender. Women are in a majority on this Council, as they are principal representatives for Advice and Advocacy, Animal Welfare, Voluntary Arts, Children and Families, Disability, Criminal Justice, Employment, Ethnic Minorities, Sport and Recreation, Volunteering, Youth, and Gender. Each Council member is responsible for setting up a comprehensive network and is funded regularly to provide and elicit information and views on their area of responsibility. This process is monitored and provides real opportunity for democratic participation.

33. The Equality Policy Unit is responsible for taking forward statutory obligations on equality. The Unit provides guidance and advice on equality issues to Assembly officials (including building equal opportunities into policy areas) and supports the work of the Committee on Equality of Opportunity (see below). It liaises with internal and external groups to identify specific initiatives to take forward, particularly in the areas of gender, race and disability, and reviews arrangements for consulting with voluntary sector equality organisations in Wales by developing consultation mechanisms for channelling the views of their members into the Assembly. The Unit also conducted an equality survey to establish baseline information about the extent to which equality of opportunity is already taken into consideration. This provides a basis by which the Assembly is able to monitor and measure its progress on equality issues and to report on actions taken and progress made. Women's organisations are represented on the Equality Policy Unit by a member of the Wales Women's National Coalition.

Committee on Equality of Opportunity

34. The Committee on Equality of Opportunity's terms of reference include the auditing of the Assembly's arrangements for promoting the principle of equality of opportunity, as well as avoiding discrimination against any person on grounds of race, sex or disability. The Committee also submits annual reports to the Assembly on those arrangements and their effectiveness, as well as reviewing and reporting to the Assembly its conclusions on the annual reports, submitted to the Assembly, by public bodies concerned with the promotion of equal opportunities. It is currently considering reports into the Public Appointments Process and Institutional Racism. The Committee has a strong interest in seeing that a dialogue with groups representing minority and disadvantaged interests takes place at all levels in the Assembly. To facilitate this, three organisations, the Equal Opportunities Commission, the Commission for Racial Equality and Disability Wales (the proposed Disability Rights Commission), attend meetings of the Committee as advisers. The Committee has conducted two baseline audits to assess to what extent race, gender, and disability, are taken into account in current policy (including personnel). The Committee considers other issues, such as ways of bridging the pay gap (also see article 11) and has also looked at issues where lead responsibility lies elsewhere, but which have implications for Assembly policies, such as asylum and immigration issues in Wales. The Committee has an important role in overseeing the Equality Policy Unit's operational plan and agreeing its content, and encourages other

[3] Professor Joan Stringer.

[4] This section is taken from Paul Chaney and Ralph Fevre's 'An Absolute Duty – Equal Opportunities and the National Assembly for Wales'.

organisations in Wales, including Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies, to observe equality policies. The Committee intends to scrutinise equality policies and practices within selected Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies and Health Authorities. A working group has been established to advise on a programme of action designed to achieve applications for public appointments that are broadly representative of the Welsh population.

35. *A Better Wales*, the Assembly's strategic plan (launched in May 2000), was developed in consultation with stakeholders and sets out the long term vision for a better Wales: "a tolerant society in which the needs of all social groups are addressed and everyone is given an opportunity to play a full part". The promotion of a culture in which diversity is valued and equality of opportunity is a reality, is one of three major themes and values at the heart of the plan. Policies and initiatives that will contribute to promoting equality of opportunity include: a childcare strategy to provide care and development opportunities for children that will, in turn, enable the primary carer to return to work if they wish; as well as encouraging under-represented groups to apply for public appointments.

36. Research[5] carried out in 2002 has concluded, that it is too early to fully assess the overall effectiveness of the policies introduced by the Assembly Government in response to its equality duty. However, the evidence of the Assembly's first two and a half years shows that the statutory equality duty is the most significant factor driving the new equality agenda in Wales.

37. Details (including legislation, pay gap) of Wales' experience for promoting gender equality are specified in the articles that follow.

[5] Research carried out by Paul Chaney and Ralph Fevre and the Institute of Welsh Affairs.

ARTICLE 1: ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION

38. The UK Government is fully committed to the elimination of discrimination against women. The UK endorses the definition of discrimination against women under article one of the Convention[6]. The UK Government's provisions to eliminate discrimination against women are categorised under the articles of the Convention that follow.

ARTICLE 2: OBLIGATIONS TO ELIMINATE DISCRIMINATION

39. As set out in previous reports, the objectives of the Convention are given effect in the UK through provisions of national law, in particular the *Equal Pay Act 1970* and the *Sex Discrimination Act 1975*, each as amended, as well as the Employment Act 1989 and Northern Ireland equivalents. These laws are described in previous reports on the implementation of the Convention. The *Human Rights Act 1998* gives further effect in domestic law to the rights and freedoms guaranteed under the *European Convention on Human Rights* and provides an opportunity to argue Convention points before a court in the UK. The Act includes Article 14 of the convention, which prohibits discrimination in the enjoyment of the Convention rights. The Act, with limited exceptions, makes it unlawful for public authorities to act incompatibly with the Convention rights. People who believe their Convention rights have been infringed are able to argue their case before domestic courts, and to receive an appropriate remedy where the court finds that a public authority has acted unlawfully. The Act also requires all courts and tribunals to read and give effect to domestic legislation, so far as possible, compatibly with the Convention rights. If they cannot, the High Court and above are able to declare the legislation incompatible and signal to Parliament that it needs to consider whether changes are needed. Under the Scotland Act 1988 any provision passed by the Scottish Parliament is not valid if it is incompatible with the Convention.

40. EU legislation on gender equality is also given effect in the UK through provisions on national law — see below for details.

Legislation introduced or amended since the last report

Family Law Act 1996-Part IV

41. Part IV of the *Family Law Act 1996* (implemented in 1997), which applies in England and Wales, offers protection to those experiencing domestic violence in a family relationship, by making it possible for them to apply for an injunction to protect them from violence. The court will grant a non-molestation order if it considers that on the balance of probabilities an order should be made for the benefit of the applicant, considering all the circumstances. The Act also provides for the court to make an occupation order that can, in certain circumstances, exclude the respondent from the family home or an area around it. Such orders are available from county courts and magistrates' courts with family jurisdiction[7]. A decision was made in late 2002, in consultation with the Domestic Violence Advisory Group (DVAG) of the Department for Constitutional Affairs (DCA), not to implement section 60 of Part IV of the *Family Law Act 1996* for the time being. Research carried out in 2002 by the University of Leicester, indicated that implementing section 60 raised a number of complex issues that require further consideration. The Advisory Group concluded that the problems identified in the research would not be most effectively addressed by the implementation of section

[6] The term 'discrimination against women' shall mean any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field. (Article 1, CEDAW).

[7] Section 60 of Part IV was not implemented in 1997. This section gives the Lord Chancellor the power to make rules of court to allow a prescribed person (a representative), or category of person, to make applications under Part IV, on behalf of survivors of domestic violence. Rules made under this section may authorise a representative to apply for an occupation or non-molestation order instead of the 'survivor'.

60, but victims would be better served by improving current procedures in the criminal and civil justice jurisdictions rather than implementing new legislation. Interaction between the court jurisdictions, effective treatment of breaches of civil injunctions and other issues is included in the Home Office domestic violence consultation paper published in June 2003. A sub-group of the DVAG has been set up to take this forward. The 1996 Act does not apply to Scotland, but similar provisions exist in Scottish law under the *matrimonial Homes (Family Protection) Scotland Act 1981*. Proposals to extend the scope of matrimonial interdict will be considered in the near future in Scotland.

Sex Offenders Act 1997

42. In order to increase the protection given to women and men of all ages from serious sexual assaults and rape in the UK, Part One of the Sex Offenders Act 1997 now requires relevant sex offenders to notify the police when they intend to travel abroad for eight days or longer. Furthermore, the Government ordered a review of Part One of the Sex Offenders Act 1997, and published proposals for consultation in 2001. The Sexual Offences Bill currently before the UK Parliament will strengthen the measures available throughout the UK.

Northern Ireland Act 1998 — Statutory Duty

43. The policy in regard to promoting equality of opportunity under section 75 of the above Act is a reserved matter but implementation is devolved to Northern Ireland Departments. Human Rights and equality were key issues in the drawing up of the Belfast Agreement. Under the terms of Section 75 of the *Northern Ireland Act 1998* "a public authority shall in carrying out its functions relating to Northern Ireland have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity". Relevant existing and new policies are subject to an equality impact assessment that aims to identify any adverse differential impact and consider ways of either avoiding or mitigating the effect. The statutory equality obligations are implemented through Equality Schemes, approved by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, and by public authorities carrying out and consulting on equality impact assessments (EQIAs) of relevant policies. Policies for EQIA are selected by applying criteria tests devised by the Equality Commission's "*Guide to the Statutory Duties*".

The Government of Wales Act 1998

44. The *Government of Wales Act 1998* set up the National Assembly for Wales. The Act contains two sections (48 and 120) that deal with equal opportunities. The first requires the Assembly to have due regard to equal opportunities in the conduct of its business. The second requires the Assembly to make arrangements to exercise its functions in a way that has due regard to equality of opportunity. It also requires the Assembly to publish an annual report showing how effective its arrangements have been in doing so.

Crime and Disorder Act 1998

45. In addition to provisions in the UK-wide *Crime and Disorder Act 1998* relating to sex offender orders, the Act contains a provision permitting a court sentencing an offender for a sexual or violent offence to impose an extended period of supervision following their release from prison if the normal supervision period would not be adequate for the purpose of preventing the commission of further offences and securing the offender's rehabilitation (in the case of sex offenders, the normal period of supervision can be extended by up to ten years).

Access to Justice Act 1999

46. The Act replaced the legal aid scheme with the Community Legal Service and the Criminal Defence Service. The aim of the Community Legal Service is to ensure that women and men have access to legal services that effectively meet their needs. The Criminal Defence Service was established for the purpose of securing that individuals involved in criminal investigations or criminal proceedings have access to such

advice, assistance and representation as the interests of justice require. The 1999 Act does not apply to Scotland, but the position in Scotland is broadly similar.

Welfare Reform and Pensions Act 1999 (Scotland)

47. In common with the rest of the UK, the *Welfare Reform and Pensions Act 1999* introduced the ability for spouses in Scotland to share a pension when they divorce. It is expected that this will in some cases improve the ability of women to build their own pension provision following a divorce.

National Minimum Wage

48. A statutory national minimum wage took effect in the UK from April 1999, marking an important step towards greater decency and fairness in the workplace. It is contributing to a reduction in the pay gap between men and women, as approximately 70% of its beneficiaries are female (see article 11 for information on the pay gap). The minimum wage has been very successful with around 1.3 million workers having stood to benefit from the last major uprating in October 2002 whilst the negative impact on employment, inflation and competitiveness has been negligible. The rates and other aspects of the operation of the minimum wage are based on recommendations from the independent Low Pay Commission. The main rate for the National Minimum Wage is currently £4.20 per hour for workers aged 22 or over. The rate for workers aged 18 to 21 (inclusive) is £3.60 per hour. The rate does not vary by region, industry or size of company. It applies to all workers whether full-time or part-time, whether permanent, temporary or casual, and to home-workers. The Low Pay Commission's fourth report was published in March 2003 and recommended increases in the minimum wage rates over a two-year period. On 1 October 2003 the main and youth rates will increase to £4.50 and £3.80 per hour, respectively, from which 1.3-1.6 million people stand to benefit. The rates from October 2004 will be subject to further fine-tuning by the Commission nearer the time but are presently recommended at £4.85 and £4.10 per hour for the main and youth rates respectively.

Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000

49. The *Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000*, puts a duty on education authorities to prepare and publish an *Annual Statement of Education Improvement Objectives*, describing how they will encourage equal opportunities and in particular observance of equal opportunity requirements in school education.

Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000

50. The *Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000* includes a provision enabling 'senior' courts to pass a new restraining order on sex offenders at the point of sentencing. The restraining order is available in cases where a court is passing a sentence of longer than twelve months imprisonment on an offender who has been convicted of an offence listed in the *Sex Offenders Act 1997*. A restraining order can be of indefinite duration or can last for a minimum of five years, and contains prohibitions relating to the offender's activities (e.g. prohibiting contact with victims). The restraining orders apply only in England and Wales.

Part-time Workers (Prevention of less favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000

51. The *Part-time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000* ensure that Britain's six million part-timers — 80% of whom are women — can no longer be treated less favourably in their employment terms than comparable full-timers, just because they work part-time. The regulations mean that part-timers should receive the same pay, pensions, maternity and parental leave benefits, training, and holidays as equivalent full timers working for the same employer.

Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000

52. Maximum penalties for offences involving indecent photographs and pseudo-photographs of girls and boys were substantially increased by the *Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000*. The maximum sentence for simple possession was raised from 6 months imprisonment to 5 years, and the maximum for making, distribution and advertising offences was increased from 3 years to 10 years imprisonment. The *Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001* increased the powers of arrest for customs officers and the police in respect of the importation of indecent or obscene material; this extends to the whole of the UK. In Scotland the penalties for taking and distributing indecent images of children and possession of these images were substantially increased in the "Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 2003 to 10 years and 5 years respectively.

Learning and Skills Act 2000

53. The Act established a new non-departmental public body, the Learning and Skills Council for England (LSC), with responsibilities for the planning and funding of post-compulsory learning, other than higher education. The Act also required the LSC, when exercising its functions, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons of different racial groups, between men and women, and between persons who are disabled and persons who are not. The Act also brought about changes in Wales, by creating a new National Council for Education and Training for Wales (CETW) with broadly similar functions to the LSC in England, but with some variations to reflect Welsh circumstances.

Employment Tribunals (Constitution and Rules of Procedure) Regulations 2001

54. Revised employment tribunal procedure regulations took effect on 16 July 2001. Changes include making it clear that where there are a number of claims arising out of the same set of facts they may be made on a single application form. This will particularly assist in jurisdictions like equal pay where there are often multiple applications arising out of the same set of facts.

Sex Discrimination (Indirect Discrimination and Burden of Proof) Regulations 2001

55. The *EC Burden of Proof Directive 97/80/EC* was implemented in the UK through the *Sex Discrimination (Indirect Discrimination and Burden of Proof) Regulations 2001*[8]. The Directive amends those parts of the *Sex Discrimination Act (SDA) 1975* that apply generally to employment and vocational training matters as regards indirect discrimination and to the burden of proof approaches in tribunals or county courts in England and Wales, and tribunals and sheriff courts in Scotland. Northern Ireland has implemented the Directive separately, but on the same terms. The regulations ensure that the applicant and respondent involved in sex discrimination cases establish the facts before a tribunal or court, the burden of proof then shifts from the applicant to the employer to show that there is a non-discriminatory reason for their actions. The second change clarifies the meaning of the phrase indirect discrimination to extend coverage to "practices". Although these are minor changes and are not expected to change current Tribunal rulings significantly, they are helpful to women.

Protection from Abuse (Scotland) Act 2001

56. The *Protection from Abuse (Scotland) Act 2001* allows the attachment of a power of arrest to any interdict obtained for the purpose of protection from abuse. This is available to women and men regardless of their relationship with the potential abuser and considerably widens the protection hitherto available under the *Matrimonial Homes (Family Protection)(Scotland) Act 1981*. The Scottish Law Commission made recommendations in its report on Family Law to improve the protection given by the 1981 Act, especially to cohabitants and divorcees. The Scottish Executive will include these in any future *Family Law Bill*.

[8] Statutory Instrument 2001 No. 2660.

Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001

57. Improving access to education and educational achievement by disabled girls and boys, women and men is an essential element of the Government's policy for ensuring equality of opportunity, full participation in society, independent living and economic self-sufficiency for disabled people. The GB wide *Disability Discrimination Act*, as amended by the *Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001* (SENDA) that came into force on 11 May 2001, is a major part of this policy. SENDA will improve the standard of education for girls and boys with special educational needs, disabled women and men within post-16 provision, and advance civil rights for disabled people in education. It is anticipated that similar legislation for Northern Ireland for children and young people with special needs and disabilities will be introduced later in 2003.

Sexual Offences (Procedure and Evidence) (Scotland) Act 2002

58. In Scotland the *Sexual Offences (Procedure and Evidence)(Scotland) Act 2002* has made changes to the law of evidence and criminal procedure to improve the protections available to victims of rape and other sexual offences. The Act also tightens up the rules governing the admissibility of evidence about a complainer's sexual history or character, and introduces a process requiring written application to be made, before the trial, for permission to lead such evidence. In deciding on the application, the court has to take into consideration appropriate protection of the complainer's privacy and dignity.

Employment Act 2002

59. The Act increased the standard rate of Statutory Maternity Pay and Maternity Allowance in Great Britain from £75 to £100. Over 350,000 mothers each year will benefit from this as well as the increase to the period of maternity pay to 26 weeks. The Act also gives 6 months paid (at the same rate as maternity pay) and a further 6 months unpaid leave for working adoptive parents. Other benefits of the Act include the introduction of work-focused interviews for partners of people receiving working-age benefits to encourage them to see work as a realistic option, build upon their skills and potential and inform them of the support on offer to find work. For the first time mothers and fathers of young children, including disabled children, have a right to apply to work a flexible working arrangement. Moreover, the Act introduces an equal pay questionnaire in employment tribunal equal pay cases, with the aim to enable individuals to request key information from their employer when they are deciding whether to bring a case as well as simplify the tribunal process benefiting both employers and employees. This could lead to settlement or resolution in some cases. DTI In Northern Ireland, legislative provisions corresponding mainly to Part I of the Employment Act 2002 (Statutory leave and Pay, Maternity, paternity and adoption) have been made. Draft provisions corresponding mainly to Parts II, III and IV of the Act (tribunal reform, dispute resolution, equal pay questionnaires) are the subject of public consultation in 2003.

Sex Discrimination Election Candidates Act 2002

60. *Sex Discrimination Election Candidates Act 2002* enables political parties in the UK, if they wish, to adopt positive measures to reduce inequality in the numbers of women and men elected as representatives of their party. It amends the *Sex Discrimination Act 1975* and *Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 Act*. The Act is permissive, not prescriptive, and it is for political parties to decide what action, if any, they choose to take in selecting their candidates for election. There are no quotas and therefore no sanctions on political parties if they take no positive action to redress any gender imbalance. However, during the Act's passage through Parliament all main political parties supported the Act and pledged to work with their parties to take advantage of the Act's provisions (for further details see article 4).

Forthcoming Legislation

EU Employment Directive 2000

61. In December 2000, the EU adopted the *Employment Directive 2000/78/EC* that established a framework for protection across Europe against discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, sexual orientation and religion and belief. It outlaws discrimination and harassment in the fields of employment, occupation, vocational guidance and training and also includes membership of workers', employers' and professional organisations. The Government's plans for implementation are designed to ensure that requirements are consistent across equality legislation, wherever practicable, and the new regulations are available to employers and others in good time before the deadlines agreed with the other Member States. Member States are required to implement the sexual orientation and religion or belief provisions by 2 December 2003. They have until 2 December 2006 to implement the age and disability provisions. The UK is implementing the strands under Article 2.2 of the EC Act and is on course for implementation of the sexual orientation and religion strands by December 2003, disability by 2004 and age by 2006. In Great Britain regulations on sexual orientation and religion or belief were approved by Parliament in June 2003 and will now come into force in December 2003. Regulations to amend the Disability Discrimination Act have been approved by Parliament, and are expected to come into force in October 2004. A separate, equivalent consultation '*Implementing EU Equality Obligations in Northern Ireland*', on a draft Regulations under Article 2.2 of the EC act, is taking place in Northern Ireland during 2003. Implementing the Employment and Race Directives on time is a key concern for the Government. Our strategy is designed to achieve greater coherence across equality legislation where that is practicable.

Review of sexual offences and penalties

62. The Government believes it is necessary that the law on sexual offences should be clear and coherent so as to protect the citizen, particularly the more vulnerable, from abuse and exploitation. It must enable abusers to be brought to justice. New legislation will also ensure that the sexual offences are fair and non-discriminatory; the offences and penalties will have to comply with the European Convention on Human Rights. The Government has considered the recommendations of the public consultation on the existing UK framework of sexual offences and penalties and published its report in 2002. Legislation to amend the existing Sexual Offences framework has been introduced into Parliament.

63. The Scottish Executive also undertook to consult further on what changes to the law might be needed to help vulnerable witnesses give evidence, and published a paper entitled *Vital Voices — Helping Vulnerable Witnesses Give Evidence*. The consultation period ended on 31 July 2002. The report on the analysis to the consultation was published in December 2002 and the Scottish Executive is now considering whether legislative changes should be made in this area.

Equal Treatment Amendment Directive 2002/73/EC

64. This Directive became law on 5 October 2002 and EU Member States have three years to implement it. We anticipate that we will transpose the legislative provisions of this Directive into British legislation by regulations amending the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 (as amended). It is probable that some of the provisions of the Directive will not require legislation. Where this is the case, we will consider the appropriate method to implement them. The Directive now reflects the changes to European gender equality law, generated by the modification of the Treaty (Article 141), incorporates many years of European case law, and takes a similar line where appropriate to the Employment and Race Directives under Article 13. Most of the provisions of the Directive are already reflected in existing GB legislation. As part of the Article 13 consultation in GB which was launched in October 2002, we took the early opportunity to consult on the principles of some of the legislative changes flowing from the Directive, particularly those which were in line with Article 13 provisions. A more detailed consultation on implementing the amended Equal Treatment Directive will take place at a later date. A separate consultation took place in Northern Ireland during the first half of 2003 on *Implementing EU Equality Obligations in Northern Ireland* with further consultation (s) later in 2003 for any outstanding issues.

Disability Discrimination Law

65. The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) already provides protection to disabled women in a wide range of areas including education, employment, transport and access to goods, services, facilities and premises. Regulations to implement the disability provisions of the Article 13 Employment Directive will strengthen and widen the DDA's employment provisions. The regulations will come into force in October 2004. The Government will be publishing a draft Disability Bill later in 2003 which will include measures to further extend rights and duties in the DDA. Important new rights for disabled women and men, girls and boys will come into effect in October 2004, when the Government implements Part III of the DDA. These rights require that, where reasonable, a service provider will have to remove, alter or avoid a physical feature (such as steps) that makes it impossible or unreasonably difficult for a disabled customer to access a service available to the general public. These regulations will also come into force in October 2004. Equivalent regulations will come into operation in Northern Ireland on 1 October 2004 and a Code of Practice will come into operation in 2003.

Northern Ireland — Single Equality Bill

66. The development and introduction of a *Single Equality Bill* is another important element of the Northern Ireland equality agenda. A preliminary consultation exercise to seek views on the scope and content of the *Single Equality Bill* was completed in 2001. The Government announced on 19 November 2002, a new strategic approach to taking forward work on equality legislation. Regulations covering amendments to existing fair employment, race, disability and equal pay legislation, and new legislation on sexual orientation were issued for consultation in February 2003. These regulations will establish a more consistent base from which the Equality Bill can be developed. Preparatory work for a single Equality Bill will continue. A full and inclusive engagement process will be undertaken with the business sector, trade unions, NGOs and the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland on proposals for a Bill. Advice will be sought for a wide range of experts on employment, equality and discrimination issues. The proposals are due to be published for public consultation in Autumn 2003.

Legislation and other measures eliminating discrimination targeting specific groups

Women with a disability

Disability Discrimination Law

67. The *Disability Discrimination Act 1995* (DDA) is the primary piece of anti-discrimination legislation in the UK to protect disabled people and is described in the previous report. As part of its efforts to analyse and evaluate recent policies, the Government set up a Disability Rights Task Force on implementing comprehensive civil rights for disabled people. As a follow-up to the Task Force's recommendations, the Government published *Towards Inclusion*, in March 2001, aimed at improving and strengthening rights for all disabled people. The following provisions will be in place by October 2004: (i) end the exemption of small employers (i. e. with fewer than 15 employees) from the scope of the DDA in 2004; (ii) widen the scope of the DDA (e.g. police force, fire fighters, prison officers, barristers in chambers (and advocates in Scotland), partners in business partnerships and employees on ships, planes and hovercrafts). In addition, *Towards Inclusion* proposes to extend Part III of the DDA to functions of public bodies that are not currently covered, because they are not "services" within the Act's definition; and to introduce a new duty on public bodies to promote equality of opportunity for disabled people. These provisions will also be introduced in Northern Ireland with the exception of the new duty on public bodies to promote equality of opportunity for disabled people that already exists there.

Disability Rights Commission

68. The Disability Rights Commission (DRC) was established by the DRC Act in 1999, based on the recommendations of the Disability Rights Task Force. The Commission, started operating in April 2000, with

the aim to eliminate discrimination against, and promote equal opportunities for disabled people. It encourages good practice in the treatment of disabled people and advises the Government on the working of the DDA and the DRC Act. The Commission prepares Codes of Practice, and is able to undertake formal investigations and research. The DRC's revised Code of Practice and practical guidance for service providers, offering guidance on new duties under Part III of the DDA to be introduced in 2004, was published on 26 February 2002. For more information on Government action to strengthen the rights of disabled women and men, facilitating their access to services and entry into the labour market see section 3 of the annex. For information on Government action on employment opportunities for disabled people see article 11.

69. Section 73 of the Northern Ireland Act created a single Equality Commission. The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland has responsibilities across a wide range of equality issues in Northern Ireland and is thus in a unique position to consider the needs of people with disabilities as well as any more specific issues surrounding the needs of women with disabilities (see institutions promoting the advancement of women and gender equality). Under the terms of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 'a public authority shall in carrying out its functions relating to Northern Ireland have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity'. This includes equality between persons with a disability and persons without.

Sexual orientation and civil partnerships

70. The Government recognises the discrimination that many gay, lesbian, transexual and bisexual people face in today's society. The Government is committed to a just and fair society and have already made progress in a number of areas relating to sexual orientation. Government achievements include:

- *Criminal Injuries Compensation.* The inequality of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme was highlighted in the Soho bombing in April 1999 when it became clear that eligibility was denied same-sex partners. The Home office revised the scheme to include lesbian and gay partners in April 2001.
- *Immigration rules.* Immigration rules have been changed to allow people in long term relationships who are unable to marry, including same sex couples, the right to remain with a person present and settled in the UK.
- *Extended overseas allowances.* The FCO has recently extended overseas allowances to married and unmarried couples, including same sex partners.
- *Spearheaded social initiatives.* The *Don't Suffer in Silence* initiative, launched in December 2000 and available from Department for Education and Schools publications, offers practical help to tackle all kinds of bullying amongst pupils in schools, including homophobic bullying. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office have launched the *Know Before You Go* campaign, which gives information to British lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual (LGBT) travellers abroad. The *Crown Prosecution Service* has recently launched a policy statement for prosecuting Cases with homophobic elements. The statement makes it clear that homophobic behaviour will, where appropriate, be prosecuted effectively through the Criminal Courts.

71. Government's current initiatives in this area include:

- *Civil Partnership Registration.* Civil Partnership Registration schemes give same sex couples the opportunity to register their relationship, and thereby obtain a package of rights and responsibilities. In 2001, the Government announced that it would examine the policy and cost implications of Civil Partnership Registration. As part of this work, the Government issued a consultation paper in June 2003.
- *Adoption.* The Government's objective is to increase the number of vulnerable children who have the opportunity, through adoption, to grow up as part of a loving, stable and permanent family. When the *Adoption and Children Act 2002*, which received royal assent 7th November, is implemented in 2004, same sex couples will be able to apply to adopt a child jointly.
- *Paternity leave.* From April 2003 a new right to two weeks paid paternity leave will be fully introduced following the provisions in the Employment Act 2002. This will be available to a parent who has responsibility for the upbringing of the child, including a mother's or adopter's same sex partner.

- *Flexible working practices.* In April 2003 a new right for parents of young children to request a flexible working pattern was introduced. Same sex partners of a biological parent are also able to request to work flexibly if they have responsibility for the upbringing of the child.
- *Registration of death.* The white paper *Civil Registration – Vital Change* recommends that the right to register deaths be extended to 'life partners'. The Government recognises that existing rules cause distress to partners at a very upsetting time.
- *New anti-discrimination law.* New anti-discrimination law will tackle discrimination in employment and training on the grounds of sexual orientation and religion (by December 2003) and age (by December 2006) as mentioned above. The Government is currently consulting on draft regulations for sexual orientation and religion.
- *Sexual Offences.* The Government believes that criminal law should not discriminate unnecessarily between men and women, or between those of different sexual orientation. The Sexual Offences Bill, introduced in to the House of Lords on 28 January 2003, proposes changes that will reflect this position.
- *Section 28*[9]. The Government believes that section 28 is an unnecessary piece of legislation, which offends many people by stigmatising the lifestyles of gay and lesbian people. Section 28 does not affect what can be taught in schools. The Department for Education and Skills' *Sex and Relationship Guidance* makes it clear that teachers should be able to deal honestly and sensitively with sexual orientation, answer appropriate questions and offer support, but that there should be no direct promotion of sexual orientation. It also emphasises that schools need to be able to deal with homophobic bullying. This is a matter for governors and teachers, not local authorities. The Government therefore supports the amendment to the Local Government Bill, laid in Parliament on 7 January 2002, which suggests a repeal of section 28. The Government hopes that this repeal will be widely supported.

Implementation of the law

Employment Tribunals (ET)

72. Many equal pay and sex discrimination disputes are settled without the need for a tribunal hearing because of the assistance of the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) which has the general duty of promoting the improvement of industrial relations as described in the previous report. The EOC also gives advice about the law to both individuals and their employers. Trades unions often assist people to bring claims and TU actions can create significant fluctuations in the number of cases. Not all discrimination cases are brought by women; a 1998 survey of Employment Tribunal applications found that 28% of discrimination cases, based on gender and race, were brought by men. In considering the number of cases, note a) the numbers concluded each year differ from the number of applications, as most cases take some time to conclude b) we have analysed the cases where sex discrimination or equal pay was the main complaint but they were a subsidiary complaint in many other claims, e.g. unfair dismissal or breach of contract, c) cases are rising overall – 80,435 were brought in 1997-98 and 112,227 in 2001-02.

73. Sex Discrimination Claims: There has been a significant increase in the total number of cases brought under the *Sex Discrimination Act 1975* since 1998 – from 6,203 in 1998-99 to 10,092 in 2001-02. However, in overall terms sex discrimination cases against the total of all cases lodged have remained in the 9%-13% range. In 2001-02, the Employment Tribunals concluded 11,161 sex discrimination complaints. This compares with 4,390 for the year 2000-01. Sex discrimination claims were 6.7% of the total in 1998-99, rising to 13.2% in 2000-01; and falling to 9.0% in 2001-2. This surge was due to an exceptional number of claims by part timers for historic pension rights, in anticipation of a Lords ruling. See tables 2.1-2.4 in annex 2 (article 2, p. 2).

[9] Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1986, or section 28 as it has become known, was originally introduced to prohibit the promotion by local authorities of *"the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship"*. However, section 28 never applied to schools, this is governed by the Education Act 1996 as amended by the Learning and Skills Act 2000 — not by Section 28. Government's position is that it is an unnecessary piece of legislation which many people find deeply offensive since it stigmatises the lifestyles of gay and lesbian people. The Government is working to tackle actual and perceived discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation. It believes s.28 should be repealed.

74. Equal Pay claims: Cases brought under the *Equal Pay Act 1970* have also risen from 1,845 in 1997-98 to 6,856 in 2000-01 then falling to 5314 in 2001-02. Although the latest figure is nearly three times higher than the 97-98 figure, they remain at about 5% of total cases brought. In 2001-02, the Employment Tribunals concluded 2,252 equal pay complaints. This compares with 1,288 for 2000-01. It is worth noting the number of cases where equal pay was a subsidiary complaint – 10,567 in 2000-01 and 3,448 in 2001-02.

Women offenders

75. Although there has been a rise in the female prison population over recent years, women still make up only a very small proportion of the overall offender population (around 6%). The Government is intensifying its efforts to understand the causes of this apparent increase as well as strengthening the rehabilitation and educational programmes targeting women prisoners, including young women offenders. In this context, the Government has published a *Strategy for Women Offenders* for consultation in 2000, followed by a report on the responses in September 2001. The issues identified by the report are feeding into the development of the *Women's Offending Reduction Programme* (WORP). The Government recognises that it is often a combination of factors that lead women to offend and, for this reason, the WORP adopts a holistic approach to examining such factors (housing, mental health, substance abuse, childcare problems, employment, abuse histories, etc.). The aim of the programme is to strengthen links and joint working between Government departments and agencies dealing with these issues so that they develop integrated policies, programmes and spending partnerships. Another key aim of the programme is to ensure the needs and interests of women offenders are incorporated into all mainstream criminal justice policies. The Programme's plan of action, formally launched in 2002, provides the framework needed to build on the substantial work already underway within Government and non-governmental agencies to reduce women's offending. It will also enhance the growing recognition across the Criminal Justice System that there needs to be a distinct response to the particular needs of women.

76. The Women's Policy Team (set up within the Home Office in 2001) manages the WORP with the aim to develop proposals to reduce the number of women in custody. The *Women's Offending Reduction Programme* focuses in particular on improving access to, and provision of, interventions that better meet the needs of women offenders. It highlights the impact and consequences of women's offending, and the differences with male offenders, to encourage specific provision for the needs and characteristics of women, especially within the community. The intention is to improve confidence in, and use of, community interventions for women offenders and to ensure that prison is only used as a last resort for women who really need to be there.

77. The Government wants to ensure that prison is only used for serious, violent and persistent offenders, where custody is necessary for the protection of the public. New sentencing powers are being introduced, in the *Criminal Justice Bill 2002-03,* that include a new generic community sentence. This will provide sentencers with a more straightforward and flexible community sanction. The sentencing powers will not extend to Scotland. A *Communications Strategy* will also promote the message that custody should be a sentence of last resort and not for offenders who have committed minor offences and who do not present a risk. The Strategy will also raise awareness of the interventions, programmes, facilities and support that are available in the community and encourage greater use to be made of them. The number of women sent to prison for fine default has declined substantially in recent years, from 1,370 in 1995 to 370 in 1997, 150 in 2000 and 70 in 2001.

78. On average women offenders are held 68 miles (109 kilometres) from their home areas. To ensure that distances and journey times do not increase, the Prison Service has re-roled male prison facilities at seven prisons. With the incorporation of these smaller establishments into the female estate, and with new female accommodation coming on stream at two new prisons (which will open in 2004-05), the Prison Service will ensure that current average distances and journey times for the female population will be maintained.

79. As part of the Government's efforts to reduce criminality among women, in June 2001, HM Chief Inspector of Prisons published a follow-up to the *1997 Women in Prison Review* (described in the previous report). Moreover, research to identify the factors leading to young women and girls offending (*What works*) is being conducted. Specifically, the aim is to identify the characteristics and needs of girls and young women, in order

to tailor programmes that will meet those needs, and reduce the numbers entering or re-entering the Criminal Justice System. An important development during the reporting period, is the Women's Estate Policy Unit, set up to develop gender-responsive regimes and policy. The Government recognises that consideration needs to be given to the differential impact that sentences can have on women and men. In order to promote adequate educational and rehabilitation programmes that take into account women's needs and experiences, the Women's Policy Team is aiming to achieve equal outcomes for women and men offenders in terms of rehabilitation and custodial sentences. For more details on the Government's efforts in this area see annex 1 (article 2, pp. 2-3) on women offenders — gender-responsive educational and rehabilitative programmes).

80. At the end of June 2001, minority ethnic groups made up 26% of the female prison population, compared to 20% of the male prison population. In the previous two years, the proportion of female prisoners from minority ethnic groups was 25% (and 19% for men). The *Women's Offending Reduction Programme* includes a specific requirement to consider the particular needs and characteristics of women from minority ethnic groups, in order to ensure that any interventions, programmes or facilities for women account for differences between the needs of women from different ethnic groups. This also means that if a programme or intervention is being developed for women in a particular location, the ethnic composition of that area is taken into account to make sure that the initiative is tailored towards the needs of the women who are likely to use it. For information on women prisoners who are foreign nationals see annex 1 (article 2, pp. 2-3).

81. A multi-agency Group within the Scottish Executive was established in December 2000, to build on the work done by an Inter-Agency Forum and implement a package of measures designed to reduce significantly the number of women held in custody in Scotland. The Group published its report *A Better Way: The Report of the Ministerial Group on Women's Offending* in February 2002.

Young offenders

82. As part of its efforts to introduce alternative custodial strategies for young offenders, the Government, under the *Crime and Disorder Act 1998*, has introduced a new custodial sentence, the *Detention and Training Order*, for young people under the age of 18. Half the sentence is served in custody and the remainder under supervision in the community. The Act also set up the Youth Justice Board (YJB), responsible for monitoring the operation of the youth justice system and providing secure accommodation for offenders under the age of 18. The YJB and the Prison Service are now in partnership and a business agreement between them sets aside prison accommodation for juveniles. It should be noted that within the women's estates, special units for girls aged 15 to 17 years have been set up at four prisons. Special regimes designed by the Prison Service and the YJB are provided in those units to meet young women offenders' needs, using additional money provided by the YJB and targeted resources to ensure that prisoners have access to the same range and quality of education and training as delivered to male juvenile offenders. This will include the new national specification for Learning and Skills for young people serving Detention and Training Orders commissioned by the Youth Justice Board published in 2002.

83. Juvenile girls aged between 15-17 are held within some adult prisons, but are accommodated separately from adults and are provided with a regime dedicated to their particular needs. The Youth Justice Board has overall responsibility for juvenile prisoners in England and Wales and the regime provided by the Prison Service is agreed with them under an annual Service Level Agreement. There were 139 juvenile girls in Prison Service establishments on 13 January 2003. The Government plans to remove juvenile girls from detention in Prison Service accommodation as soon as secure places in the community can be provided.

84. In Northern Ireland, female prisoners including young female offenders are held in a separate house within Maghaberry prison. Although young females are accommodated on a separate landing they share facilities such as education and visits. When the numbers are only 1 or 2, young females are also permitted to associate with adults in order that they are not unduly denied the company of others. The average number of young females in 2002 ranged between 3-5 offenders. An Estate Review is considering the future location of the female prisoners and young offenders with the intention of perhaps providing alternative accommodation at the male Young

Offenders Centre. However, the full detail of this proposal has yet to be worked through including the level of regime for female young offenders. The main issue of low numbers will continue to be a problem.

Mother and Baby Units

85. There are Units at four prisons providing a total of 68 places, with 10 additional places at two other prisons to open in September 2003. There are also plans to create Mother and Baby Units at the two new privately managed contracted out prisons at Ashford and Peterborough, which are scheduled to open in 2004. The management of Mother and Baby Units is currently being reviewed in the light of the *Framework for the Assessment for Children in Need and their Families* (published by the Department of Health in 2000), the recent Judicial Reviews on mothers with their children in prison and the Department for Education and Skill's publications on national standards for crèches and full day care for children (published in 2001).

Gender-responsive educational and rehabilitative programmes

86. In its efforts to reduce the number of women offenders, the Government has made progress in the development and implementation of rehabilitation and educational programmes that are gender-responsive. In this context, the Government is working to improve educational and rehabilitation programmes that are gender-responsive as well as seeking alternative sentencing and custodial strategies for young female and girls offenders. See annex 1 (article 2, pp. 2-3) for details of offending behaviour programmes that address the needs of women offenders; resettlement strategies for women prisoners; training and education for women prisoners.

ARTICLE 3: THE DEVELOPMENT AND ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

Measures taken to alleviate women's poverty

87. The Government recognises that although the position of women in the UK has improved dramatically over the last few decades they are more likely than men to be in low-income groups, have lower employment rates than men, and are less likely to be contributing to a second pension. The Government has undertaken research to alleviate poverty among women and men, girls and boys. These disadvantages partly stem from women accounting for the majority of both lone parents and single pensioners. Moreover, recent research showed that household type and marital status were more important determinants of low income in later life for women than for men. There are a number of factors behind this phenomenon. For example, nine out of ten lone parents are women; they are less likely to have qualifications than partnered women, more likely to report a long-standing illness or disability and more likely to have a child below school age.

88. The Government is determined to tackle poverty, from childhood through to old age, by tackling the causes of poverty and social exclusion, not just the symptoms (see section on the situation of older women below). These causes are complex and multi-dimensional and can only be addressed by joined up action across Government and beyond. The Government publishes an annual report on poverty, *Opportunity for all*, (the first was published in September 1999) setting out its strategy, along with the measures against which the Government will be judged. The latest report *Opportunity for all — fourth annual report* was published in September 2002 and shows that the Government is making real progress towards eradicating poverty and its causes. The Government's strategy includes tackling inequalities by improving public services; constantly improving understanding of poverty and social exclusion, to identify what are the greatest priorities and what will work best to tackle them; tackling current and future poverty including supporting those unable to work; investing in services for girls and boys to break cycles of deprivation; and working in partnership with other stakeholders.

Policy Measures

89. The Government has adopted a range of policy responses to alleviate women's poverty. These measures are described in detail throughout the report (in particular, see articles 10, 11, 12, 13, 15 and 16). Some examples include, the National Minimum Wage (NMW) (see articles 2 and 11 for details). Around 1.3 million workers stood to benefit from higher pay as a result of the last major uprating in October 2002 of the NMW and around 70% of the beneficiaries are women. However, the NMW has to be seen as one part of a wider strategy. From October 2002 the NMW in conjunction with the Working Families' Tax Credit and other benefits provides a guaranteed minimum income of at least £231 a week (over £12,000 a year) for families with children with someone working 35 hours a week (see article 13 for details). Around 343,700 lone parents have joined the New Deal for Lone Parents and more than 1 in 3 participants (172,460) have found work (see article 11 for details). Pension Credit is particularly beneficial to women because they tend to have smaller pensions than men do. Of the pensioner households that stand to gain just over half will be single women, around 30% will be men and women in a couple, and around 15% will be single men (see article 13 for details).

90. In ensuring that childcare does not prove to be an on-going barrier to women entering the labour market, the Government is continuing to develop the National Childcare Strategy (see article 11 for details). There has been a substantial expansion in childcare provision: since 1997, 497,000 new childcare places have been created, benefiting over 906,000 children and the Government is well on track to meet the target of creating new places for 1.6 million children by 2004. Annual childcare funding will more than treble between 2000-01 and 2003-04 and much of this increased funding will be targeted on the 20% most disadvantaged areas. With a budget of £300 million over three years to 2004, the Neighbourhood Nursery programme is the biggest ever single investment to increase childcare provision. The cost of childcare can be a significant factor in parents' employment decisions. The childcare tax credit component of the Working Families' Tax Credit provides financial assistance to low- and middle-income working parents to pay for childcare. Parents can receive help with up to 70% of their eligible childcare costs. Recent figures show that 160,000 families are receiving the childcare tax credit component – a dramatic increase from the 47,000 who had help with childcare costs under the preceding Family Credit scheme. The 2002 Spending Review confirmed the Government's intention to continue to expand and improve childcare provision. The Spending Review saw a doubling of spending on childcare. The extra funding will support the expansion of childcare places across the country and, in particular, the provision of integrated early education childcare and family services in a network of children's centres in disadvantaged areas. As part of this strategy, it will develop a thriving supply of childcare; provide financial help to lower- and middle-income parents for whom the cost of childcare is a barrier to work; and transform the way services are delivered to ensure that they better meet the needs of children and their parents, particularly for the most vulnerable.

91. Eradicating poverty is not just about providing income, or supporting people into jobs. Other forms of Government intervention can help break cycles of deprivation in the early years, including education and Early Years Investment: the 2000 Spending Review allocated resources that will result in average real growth in education spending of some 6.6 per cent a year across the UK over the four years from 1999 — 2000 to 2003 – 04 (see article 10 for details). Sure Start programmes are helping to strengthen families and local communities with a range of support services for children living in deprived areas. The Government is funding a major expansion in free Early Education. All 4 year olds have been guaranteed a free early education place since 1998, with an increasing number of 3 year olds now enjoying free provision through a £1.13 billion programme that began in 1999. By September 2004, all 3 year olds will enjoy this entitlement. Overall funding of early education for 3 and 4 year olds will double from £1 billion in 1996-97 to £2 billion in 2003-04. The Connexions Service will, through both a universal and targeted approach, provide all teenagers with the information, guidance, personal development opportunities and work-related learning they need for a successful transition to adulthood. It will particularly help those at risk of social exclusion or of being marginalized. By the end of 2002-03 the Government will be investing £420 million in the Service across England. The Service will extend throughout England by 2003 (see article 10 for details).

The situation of older women

92. The Government is determined to ensure that all women and men enjoy secure, active, independent and fulfilling lives. The Government is addressing the situation of older women in a cross-sectoral manner, with a view to ensuring adequate provision of their physical, mental, economic and social well-being, that takes into account the demographic change in the UK. In this context, a Cabinet Sub-committee on Older People, consisting of senior Ministers from key Government Departments, has been set up to co-ordinate and drive forward our action for older women and men. The Government has introduced a range of policies that directly benefit older women. These policies are described throughout the report, examples include:

- *State Second Pension* that extends second-tier pension rights for people without earnings, including carers - almost all of the 2 million carers who will benefit are women;
- *Stakeholder Pension* — flexible pension products designed with the employment patterns of women in mind. Stakeholder pensions have restricted charges capped at 1% of the fund and there are no penalties for breaks in contributions and for switching providers. Research shows that 40% of stakeholder pensions have been taken up by women;
- *Pension Credit* will potentially benefit just under half of all pensioners, from October 2003. Over half of those entitled will be single women;
- *Equalising pension age to 65* will help women as they will have longer time in which to build their pensions;
- *Pension Sharing on Divorce* was introduced in December 2000. Legislation enabled couples to share the value of their pensions on divorce or nullity of their marriage – beneficiaries are more likely to be women;
- *Start point of National Insurance* (NI) contributions was separated from the Low Earning Limit for Employees. This has brought more people into the NI system, and has benefited 500,000 women, without requiring low earners to pay contributions. They do not need to pay contributions until they earn £89 per week, whereas entitlement to benefits starts at earnings of £75 a week.

93. The Government is committed to improving pensions information for women and men and will promote informed choice such as individualised pension forecasting – these measures are particularly important for women. In order to inform women about the rules of State and Private pensions and changing circumstances over the working life, the Government has produced a leaflet *Pensions for women – Your Guide* and a media campaign about pension provision. The Government intends to look at many different ways that will alert women to consider their future income in retirement and inform them of their options.

94. See article 10 for details on Government action to encourage older women into continuing education as a means to alleviate poverty. Also see article 12 for details on Government measures addressing the physical and mental well-being of older women. More details on social and economic benefits for older women are detailed in article 13.

Minority ethnic women

95. The Government is seeking to address the issues affecting minority ethnic women. Government actions in this area are described throughout the report (see articles 7, 10, 11, 12, 16 and previous report). The Women and Equality Unit is seeking to ensure that in its activities and research the issues affecting women from ethnic minorities are taken into account and that these are integrated into the Unit's work programmes. Some examples include:

Ministerial activities

96. Patricia Hewitt, Minister for Women, co-hosted with the Prime Minister a discussion group for Asian women. This provided the opportunity for Asian women to question the Prime Minister and Ministers for Women about how Government policy affects their lives. Ministers for Women hosted a reception at Lancaster

House as part of *Black History Month* to celebrate the achievements and contribution that black women have made to British Society in areas such as the economy, politics, law, medicine, arts, community activities and public services. In November 2002, the then Minister for Women, Barbara Roche, spoke at the *TUC Black Women at Work* conference on the issue of minority ethnic women and their participation in the labour market. Barbara Roche participated in the African Caribbean Finance Forum (ACFF) annual careers fair diversity debate on *Diversity in the Workforce*. Patricia Hewitt, Minister for Women hosts a meeting every 6 months for *Women Living in Muslim Communities* to discuss issues specifically affecting them and their communities. These include Labour Market participation, religious discrimination and participation in public life. Ministers for Women have also acted to increase the number of minority ethnic women holding public appointments. At 12 seminars across England minority ethnic women were invited to participate and speak. In October 2002, the Government held a specific public appointment seminar in Leicester targeting minority ethnic women to encourage them to apply for more public appointments. The Government is following these women as part of the evaluation research for the whole programme to identify and tackle potential barriers to public appointments.

Research

97. In October 2002 the WEU in partnership with Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) launched research on *Black Women's Organisations*. The WEU was represented on the JRF research advisory group for this project. Senior officials from the Women and Equality Unit gave a presentation at the Bristol University Conference on *Black and South Asian Women in the Labour Market* on the work of the Women and Equality Unit and how it relates to minority ethnic women.

98. The Women and Equality Unit also have a number of research projects underway that will integrate data on minority ethnic women's experiences: Public Appointments research, Domestic Violence research and Mainstreaming Equality into research. The Women and Equality Unit produces a regular fact sheet on the position of minority ethnic women in the Labour Market providing analyses of Labour Force Survey data. The Women and Equality Unit *Key Indicators research* (2002) on the position of women in the UK brings together for the first time official statistics by gender, age and ethnicity (where data allows for this).

International Development

99. The elimination of gender discrimination is a key component of the Government's international development policy. During the reporting period, the Department for International Development (DfID) published a gender strategy paper, *Poverty elimination and the empowerment of women* (September, 2000) that recognises the empowerment of women is an essential precondition for the elimination of world poverty and the upholding of human rights. In December 2000, the second *Government White Paper on International Development* was published, focusing on how to manage the process of globalisation to benefit poor people, a disproportionate number of whom are women. The White Paper states that the Government will "work with others to manage globalisation so that poverty is systematically reduced and the International Development Targets (now the Development Millennium Goals) achieved and to build a stronger, more open and accountable international system, in which poor people and countries have a more effective voice".

100. The focus on poverty elimination, and by extension on elimination of gender discrimination, was consolidated in law by a new International Development Act that came into force in June 2002. Implementation of this policy is based on a "twin track" approach that combines specific activities aimed at empowering women, with a commitment to place gender equality concerns into the mainstream of development programmes. DfID spending across all sectors, on activities that include the promotion of gender equality and the removal of gender discrimination, has increased significantly in recent years. During 2001-02, from a total bilateral commitment of £1,425 million, some £230 million of activities had gender equality as either the main goal or significant objective. This level of commitment is expected to continue. DfID is currently supporting more than 500 projects and programmes worldwide aimed at promoting gender equality.

101. During the reporting period, DfID has worked to make resources and opportunities for economic and human development more readily available to women, particularly those who are poor. Key approaches include facilitating women's access to markets and employment opportunities, making credit more readily available to poor women, and ensuring that infrastructure improvements benefit women as well as men. The Government has also contributed to the gender aware design of economic management, and human and social development programmes. Examples include through the Poverty Reduction Strategy Process in support of HIPC debt relief and other national poverty reduction strategies, support to human rights programmes, and the growth of a socially responsible private sector.

102. Recognising that the effects on women of globalisation and the liberalisation of world trade have shown both benefits and costs, the Government is working to identify policy instruments to improve opportunities for the poor and to reduce the negative effects on the most vulnerable. As well as supporting initiatives on ethical trade and socially responsible business, DfID is promoting core labour standards, which will protect women and other workers from exploitation, including through several programmes with the International Labour Organisation. Support is also provided to innovative programmes aimed at developing a more central role for women in conflict prevention and post conflict reconstruction. Moreover, recognising women's disadvantages in education and health, DfID expenditure in these areas is expected to continue to rise substantially.

103. Other significant DfID initiatives that have achieved results since 1999, include:

- New approaches that emphasise links to social benefits and women's needs, are being developed with DfID support. The department is also promoting participatory planning and assessment methods in road improvement programmes in Uganda and Ghana, and supporting a fifteen-country research programme in Africa and Asia, aimed at developing more gender-sensitive approaches to travel and transport programmes.
- Supporting the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee, and other credit providers around the world, the UK Government is making small-scale credit available to millions of poor women.
- DfID is helping the government of The Gambia to incorporate gender concerns into the planning and implementation of their public services. Assistance is being provided as part of wider DFID support to the Gambian's Strategy for Poverty Alleviation and is channeled through their Co-ordinating Office and the Women's Bureau. Promoting a holistic and integrated approach, these units are working directly with key departments – such as health and education – to ensure that improved services bring real and lasting benefits to those who need them most.
- Support to basic health care, awareness raising on sexually transmitted diseases, and the promotion of behaviour change has helped female sex workers in West Bengal, India, reduce infection rates to 5%, compared with 70% among similar groups in other parts of the country.
- Support for research to develop a microbicide that provides an alternative form of protection from HIV/AIDS infection for women.
- Development of new effective approaches to reducing maternal mortality in Malawi and Nepal, and support international efforts to raise awareness of maternal mortality as a human rights issue.
- Support to primary education in India has helped bring about an increase in enrolment of 6.5 percent over a two-year period. The enrolment of girls generally has grown by 7.5%, and among disadvantaged girls from scheduled castes and scheduled tribes by 12.4% and 9.6%, respectively.
- Support for a growing portfolio of work aimed at stopping violence against women, including work with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees to protect women in refugee camps.

104. More than half of the UK aid budget is spent through multilateral channels, including the European Commission, the United Nations, the World Bank and regional development banks. UK collaboration with the UN bodies is continuing to strengthen and expand, especially in support of the advancement of women and gender equality. Examples include increasing significantly the Government's financial support to the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and funding to the Division for the Advancement of Women of the UN Secretariat for expert group meetings in support of inter-governmental processes. DfID has also

supported gender mainstreaming efforts within the International Labour Organisation's child labour programmes as well as the development of rights-based methodologies in programming by the United Nations Development Fund for Children (UNICEF). DfID is also helping the World Health Organisation and the Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices to develop policy, guidelines, and training programmes for health workers to tackle practices prejudicial to the health of young girls, including female genital mutilation.

105. The UK continues to play a full role in gender-related and other work of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which is one of the main forums for donor co-ordination. As a follow-up to earlier work with DAC, DfID contributed to the preparation of a *DAC good practice guide on incorporating gender concerns into sector-wide approaches to development co-operation*. DfID has strongly supported the programme of action for mainstreaming gender equality in development policy launched by the European Commission in autumn 2001. A close and active dialogue on the gender aspects of development is also being maintained with the World Bank.

ARTICLE 4: ACCELERATION OF EQUALITY BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN

Elections

106. The Government is committed to encouraging the equal representation of women and men democratic representatives. The Government has successfully introduced into Parliament a bill to allow political parties to take positive action to redress the under representation of women in UK democratic institutions. *Sex Discrimination Election Candidates Act 2002* enables political parties, if they wish, to adopt positive measures to reduce inequality in the numbers of men and women elected as representatives of their party. It amends the *Sex Discrimination Act 1975* and *Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 Act*. The Act is permissive, not prescriptive, and it is for political parties to decide what action, if any, they choose to take in selecting their candidates for election. There are no quotas and therefore no sanctions on political parties if they take no positive action to redress any gender imbalance. However, during the Act's passage through Parliament all main political parties supported the Act and pledged to work with their parties to take advantage of the Act's provisions.

107. The first elections where positive measures will be used are, effectively, the elections to the devolved administrations and certain local government elections in May 2003. The Act has a 'sunset' clause and consequently it will cease to be law at the end of 2015. The Government will continue to assess the Act's effectiveness, and decide by 2015 whether its provisions should be extended beyond that date. Elections to devolved administrations in Scotland and Wales in 1999 and to the Greater London Authority, where positive measures were used by some political parties, resulted in a comparatively high level of female representation (37.2%, 41.7% and 40% respectively).

ARTICLE 5: SEX ROLES AND STEREOTYPING

Sex Roles and Stereotyping

108. The Government is committed to making use of the full range of means at its disposal to remove any barriers to equality of opportunity and to enable women to reach their full potential. In this context, the Government is working to provide good quality, broadly based education and offer good advice on education and career choices breaking down sex stereotypes, in order to reduce job segregation, the skills and pay gaps, as well as fulfilling the potential talent.

Education

109. The Government replaced Advanced GNVQs (General National Vocational Qualifications) with Vocational A levels (exams taken at the age of 18). The latter are not gender-specific and promotional literature aimed at prospective students avoids gender-bias. Moreover, young people are given advice and guidance on the full range of opportunities, breaking down sex stereotypes and encouraging women and men to enter non-traditional areas. In 2001-02, in England and Wales, nearly half of all new Modern Apprentices (a traditionally male-dominated area) were young women (43% Advanced Modern Apprentices and 55% Foundation Modern Apprentices), in line with female participation in work-based training for young people generally. Moreover, the Careers Service is required to operate an equal opportunities policy that questions stereotypical career choices (for further details see article 10).

Women in Science, Engineering and Technology (SET)

110. Recognising that women are under-represented in the SET sector, the Government is committed to increase the representation of women in the SET sector at all levels and, for this purpose, conducted thorough evaluations of the situation of women in SET in the UK. As a follow-up to the 1994 *Rising Tide* report, the Government set up the Promoting SET for Women Unit (PSETW) in the Office of Science and Technology (OST) in its Department for Trade and Industry, to tackle the under-representation of women in SET. The role of the Unit is to improve the recruitment, retention and progression of women throughout SET education and employment and to increase their involvement in shaping SET policy. The Unit's long-term objective is to achieve a SET community where it is assumed that women can have successful, rewarding careers based on equality of opportunity at every level throughout all institutions.

111. Other Government measures to promote the role of women in science, engineering and technology include: *Baroness Greenfield's Review,* a strategic review that aims to identify priorities for more focused action to improve the recruitment and retention of women in SET and highlights women's achievement and contribution to SET. Recognising mentoring as a key tool in personal development and empowerment, the PSETW Unit is funding a pilot 3-year national mentoring scheme for women in SET. The Project is delivered through two organizations, the Women's Engineering Society (WES) and the Association of Women in Science and Engineering respectively (AWISE) and supported by five major companies (Ford, HSBC, BAE, Astra Zeneca and Alstom Power). An awareness-raising campaign that includes the production of posters illustrating the profile of young women in SET careers, depicting a range of professions that can be entered through both vocational training or via an academic route. The posters highlight the relevance of SET and aim to convince girls to enter SET careers. In recognition of Rosalind Franklin's contribution to 20th century science, the Government set up the Rosalind Franklin Award, in 2002. The competition aims to further the Government's objectives to improve the overall international ranking of the UK's science and engineering base and to increase the participation of women in SET. The *Athena Awards project* is a UK-wide initiative that aims to encourage the advancement of women in higher education and to significantly increase the number of women recruited in managerial positions within the SET field. This project builds on best practices such as development grants to Higher Education Institutions for mentoring, networking and staff development for women in science and engineering. As part of its efforts to reduce job segregation and gender stereotypes, the Government commissioned a study on *Maximising Returns to Science Engineering and Technology Careers*, published in January 2002.

112. The Science and Engineering Ambassadors (SEAs) programme was officially launched by the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department for Education and Skills jointly on 31 January 2002. The programme is co-ordinated nationally by SETNET and managed locally by the UK-wide network of 53 SETPoints. SEAs provide a structure to strengthen and expand, within a single quality-assured framework, all of the activities that encourage younger people with STEM skills to go back into schools to act as role models, relating the STEM subjects more clearly to the world of work, and encouraging others to follow them.. SEAs is an integral part of the larger Science Technology Engineering Maths (STEM) Delivery Initiative and will play a major role in delivering the STEM Delivery objective. The Programme is backed by companies including BAE

SYSTEMS, BP, IBM, Ford and Unilever, who run schemes in local schools. SEAs aim to provide a national umbrella resource that establishes a quality "brand" and will make Ambassadors available to all schools that want them. As of 22 January 2003, there were 667 Ambassadors registered with a further 3,000 being trained and more coming on stream daily. Of those who have applied and are under 30, over half are women. The WISE programme "Speaking Out" has made institution speakers' database available to the SEAs management and a particular effort is being made to attract people from all under-represented groups.

Women in Information Technology, Electronics and Communications (ITEC)

113. Recognising that women's participation in ITEC education and employment is lower than that of men[10], the Government is attempting to improve this by an integrated and holistic approach. The Government conducted a comprehensive analysis of the position of women on courses that are expected to lead to a career in ITEC. The analysis compared patterns in the participation of women in the UK with those in other countries, and also identified lessons for education and employment policy and best practices that can be learned from experiences abroad, with the aim to improve the situation for women in the UK. The *Opportunity for All* White Paper, published in February 2001, illustrates the Government's commitment to working with business to increase women's representation in this sector. A cross-departmental strategy was developed with an integrated approach following women through education and into ITEC employment. The strategy addresses education, learning and career choices (to counter the negative perceptions girls develop about ITEC); unemployed women and women re-entering the labour market and career changes (to address the problems women face accessing appropriate training or re-skilling and to overcome employer prejudice about their potential as ITEC professionals); and retention in ITEC employment (to ensure that working practices in ITEC businesses do not make it difficult for women to remain in employment or progress in their chosen career path).

The Media

114. The role of the media in the portrayal of women is widely recognised by Government, broadcasting regulators and broadcasters. Full details of the operations and regulations of the UK media were illustrated in the previous reports and this report therefore concentrates largely on recent developments.

115. A new regulator for the whole communications sector, Office for Communications (OFCOM), will supersede the current regulators, the Independent Television Commission, Radio Authority, Broadcasting Standards Commission, OFTEL and Radio-communications Agency. The Communications Bill, which is currently going through Parliament, requires OFCOM to set licence conditions for all broadcasters who meet the thresholds to promote equality of opportunity between men and women. There will be a corresponding duty on OFCOM to promote equality of opportunity in employment within broadcasting bodies and to promote the development of opportunities for training and retraining of persons whom broadcasters employ or who work in connection with the making of programmes for inclusion in any service.

Portrayal of women in advertising

116. Television advertising must comply with the Independent Television Commission (ITC) Advertising Standards Code as revised in September 2002. The Code states that "advertisements must not prejudice respect for human dignity or humiliate, stigmatise or undermine the standing of identifiable groups of people" (Section 6.6). The Code does recognise that the use of stereotypes is an inevitable part of establishing characters within the brief span of a TV commercial, but warns that care is needed to ensure that the use of such stereotypes does not condone or feed prejudice or perpetuate damaging misconceptions. Broadcasters are responsible for making sure that advertisements shown on their channels comply with the ITC Code, and most broadcasters use the Broadcast Advertising Clearance Centre to check them for compliance. Although traditional gender stereotypes still appear, the trend in recent years has been towards greater experimentation with less stereotyped imagery

[10] In 2000, 13% of women worked in information, technology, electronics and communications-related jobs (J. Millar, N. Jagger. *Women in ITEC courses and careers*. 2001).

and greater use of irony when stereotypes are used or, often, reversed. This is reflected by the decline in percentage of complaints related to sexism in advertising from 45% in 1999-2000 to 37% in 2001-02[11].

Employment of women in the broadcasting media

117. The Government recognises that increasing the number of women in senior posts in broadcasting can result in the portrayal of women in a fair and sympathetic manner in this industry. Appointments to broadcasting regulatory and complaints bodies are made on merit. Within this framework, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport has set a target for 50% representation by women on its sponsored bodies by 2004. In August 2001, the Government reached its interim target of 35%, with Ministerial appointments to broadcasting regulatory and complaints bodies standing at 34.8%. Positive steps are being taken to achieve the 2004 targets, including: (i) active participation in the Women and Equality Unit's (WEU) regional seminars aimed at encouraging women to enter high-level public appointment (see article 7 for further details); (ii) targeted sectoral media articles; (iii) wide-dissemination of all Government-sponsored body posts (e.g. through the internet); (iv) working with equality groups, individuals and others to identify potential candidates for public appointments, particularly among under represented groups. As mentioned in the previous report, the media are subject to Equal Opportunities legislation.

118. In 2002 the BBC brought together all of its equal opportunity and diversity activities into one shared service centre. The newly formed 'Diversity Centre' covers the whole spectrum of diversity activity from race and religion to disability, age, sexual orientation and gender. In recent years the BBC has made progress in meeting its publicly stated targets for representation of women at all levels of the organisation. The percentage of women who have reached the most senior levels of management in the organisation increased from 16.5% in 1993 to 37.8% in 2002. Where representation is still low in some non-traditional areas (e.g. engineering, technical resources), the BBC is continuing initiatives that positively impact on the recruitment of women. Everyone involved in recruitment is required to undertake 'Fair Selection' training to ensure they are fully aware of the BBC's responsibility under the *Sex Discrimination Act (1975)* and other equality legislation. The BBC carries out regular portrayal monitoring to ensure that the representation of all groups, including women is acceptable. The BBC does not consider flexible working and childcare matters as 'women's issues'. Although they may predominantly affect women in the workforce the BBC believes they apply equally to all individuals and should therefore not be aligned with gender policies. Moreover, the BBC is an active member of Opportunity Now, an initiative aimed at realising the economic potential that women at all levels can contribute to the workforce, and regularly takes part in network events, sharing best practice and updating its managers on key changes in legislation.

119. All 15 independent TV companies, GMTV (the national breakfast television licensee), Channel 4 and Channel 5 have policy statements on equal opportunities and arrangements in place for monitoring the effectiveness of their policies, for example in responses to job advertisements and appointments. Initiatives include flexible working arrangements, childcare provision, job sharing, targeted job advertisements, training courses for women and work experience placements. Women are relatively well-represented at middle and senior management levels, standing at 39% for ITV, 43% for Channel 4, 42% for Channel 5 in 2001[12]. Companies have adopted a wide range of initiatives, including links with schools, local projects, sponsorships or participation in careers events, special training schemes targeted trainee programmes, work placement schemes, mentoring and work shadowing.

[11] Broadcasting Commission 2002.

[12] Independent Television Commission's Annual Performance Reviews of the ITV companies 2001.

The Internet

120. The UK obscenity legislation and the law in general applies to the Internet as it does elsewhere. Material that is illegal "off line" is illegal "on line". The legal framework underpins the work of the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF), a self-regulatory body established in September 1996 by Internet Service Providers (ISP), with the support of the Government, in response to growing concern about the availability of potentially illegal material, particularly child pornography, on the Internet. It operates a hotline to which people can report potentially illegal material they come across on the Internet. The IWF transmits reports on such material to the police, when it originates in the UK, or to the National Criminal Intelligence Service when it originates overseas, so that the relevant law enforcement agencies can consider whether to take action. The IWF also passes reports to ISPs so that they can remove illegal material hosted on their systems. If the ISP fails to remove the site, following notification by the IWF they can also be liable to prosecution. The Internet Content Rating Association based in the UK is working towards the international development of a voluntary content rating system. It is intended that this will be compatible with filtering software packages which have been developed to enable schools and parents to restrict the types of websites to which their children have access.

ARTICLE 6: EXPLOITATION OF WOMEN

Prostitution and trafficking in women

121. The UK is fully committed to combating trafficking in women and its associated activities. The UK was one of the first countries to sign the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime, and its Optional Protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children. This requires signatories to ensure trafficking is a punishable offence, alongside the introduction of prevention, education and support initiatives for victims. The Government is taking steps to implement the EC Framework Decision of 19 July 2002 on combating trafficking in human beings. The Government also supports action to combat illegal immigration including that of women for sexual purposes, in both EU and international fora and has supported information campaigns aimed at alerting women to the risks involved in such illegal immigration. The UK seeks to encourage information and good practice sharing to combat trafficking. Among other initiatives in 2002, the UK participated in the EU/IOM STOP European Conference on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings.

122. Within the UK there are currently comprehensive laws in place to deal with those who engage in activities associated with trafficking and prostitution (see previous reports for details).

123. The Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act introduced a new offence of trafficking for the purpose of controlling in prostitution with a maximum penalty of 14 years. This offence came into force 10th February 2003. It is a stop-gap measure pending introduction of more wide ranging offences covering trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation which are included in the new Sexual Offences Bill. We are working to define a new offence of trafficking for labour exploitation, which will be introduced when parliamentary time permits. Trafficking in human organs is already specifically outlawed throughout the EU.

124. With the aim to review and update the existing laws, the Government conducted a consultation process, *Setting the Boundaries: Reforming the Law on Sex Offences*. Activities such as pimping, and controlling someone in prostitution are considered in depth in the review, and the recommendations that the Government is currently considering seek to ensure that those involved in these activities are adequately and appropriately dealt with and that the penalties involved are suitable.

125. In May 2000, the Government set up Reflex, a practical multi-agency taskforce on organised immigration crime, which includes people trafficking. Between June 2002 and December 2002, Reflex has had 27 operations which have reached the arrest phase. These operations range from those conducted at the local level by individual police forces or agencies to the national level involving multi-agency partnerships. Its three main

tasks are to develop intelligence leads for the operational arm, to carry out surveillance and to prov assistance to investigations with a view to future prosecutions. It is providing a significant new capa respond to trafficking of women. A Child Protection Pilot Project has also been launched recently at H (London's main airport) as a joint initiative between the Metropolitan Police and the Immigration Servi

126. As set out in chapter 5 of the White Paper *Secure Borders, Safe Haven: Integration with Div Modern Britain*, in co-operation with the voluntary sector, the Government is looking at how it will victims of trafficking particular support so that they can escape their circumstances and, in certain ca law enforcement against organised criminals. Where they are willing to come forward to the author Government is looking at special arrangements for their protection. A pilot scheme for adult vi trafficking for sexual exploitation was launched on March 10th. The scheme is being delivered th voluntary organisation with considerable experience of providing specialist housing to victims of violence and other vulnerable women. The scheme will run initially on a pilot basis for six months, in assess the scale of demand for the services and to test its effectiveness.

127. The Government has also recently published a trafficking toolkit, which will be a best practice g immigration officers, police and others potentially dealing with trafficking. In particular, it will raise a of the difference between trafficking and smuggling, and help those concerned to treat trafficking victi The toolkit is available on www.crimereduction.co.uk/toolkits

128. Alongside effective enforcement in the UK is the need to develop intelligence and underta operations against trafficking networks in transit and source countries. We have provided a total of £20 fund various anti-trafficking projects in the Western Balkans region implemented under the auspice Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe's democratisation arm, the Office for De Institutions and Human Rights. We have also provided assistance to the recently established anti-tra task force at the South East Europe Co-operation Initiative (SECI) centre in Bucharest, which is fo cross border co-operation and intelligence sharing between its 11 member states in the Balkan region.

129. The Government is funding projects as part of its *Crime Reduction Programme*, to tackle cr disorder associated with prostitution, with the aim to identify models of best practice. This will inc strategies for women and men who wish to leave prostitution. Moreover, the Government conducts programmes for immigration officials that include raising awareness on the issue of trafficking in w May 2000, the Home Office and the Department of Health issued joint guidance on children inv prostitution, emphasising that children involved in prostitution are, primarily, abused children, and ou treated as such and cared for appropriately. The guidance stresses the use of the full range of criminal against 'child abusers' as well as encouraging all relevant bodies to treat the child primarily as a v abuse, safeguarding and promoting their welfare, and work together to provide children with strategi prostitution. (Also see articles 2 and 16 for further details).

ARTICLE 7: POLITICAL AND PUBLIC LIFE

Women in political life

130. The Government is taking action to increase the number of women in political and public life. 1997 General Election there were 120 women as Members of Parliaments (MPs), double the figure previous election. The General Election on 2001 resulted in the return of 118 women as MPs, represent of members. Since the changes in composition in 1999, women now make up 16% of the House of 1999, women represented 24% of the UK members of the European Parliament. With the aim to inc number of women in the political life, the Government introduced the *Sex Discrimination (El Candidates) Act 2002* to remove the domestic legal barrier to political parties who wish to use measures to reduce inequality in the numbers of women and men elected. The Act is permissive,

parties themselves are free to choose what measures, if any, they wish to take to reduce gender inequality (see article 4 for details).

The Northern Ireland Assembly

131. The new Northern Ireland Assembly was elected on 25 June 1998 under the terms of the *Northern Ireland (Elections) Act 1998*. 15 of the 108 members of the Northern Ireland Assembly are women. Before suspension of the Assembly in October 2002, three of the ten Departments were headed by female Ministers (Agriculture and Rural Development; Health, Social Services and Public Safety; and Education and Learning). One of the two Northern Ireland Women's Coalition Assembly Members is also one of the Deputy Speakers in the Assembly. Before suspension of the Assembly on 14 October 2002 two of the four Ministers were women. Following suspension the Secretary Of State for Northern Ireland appointed two additional Junior Ministers to his team to assist in the work of overseeing the formerly devolved institutions. Two of the five NIO Ministers are women. In the *Good Friday Agreement*, the Northern Ireland political parties affirmed the right of women to full and equal political participation.

The Scottish Parliament

132. In a referendum in September 1997 the people of Scotland voted for a Scottish Parliament. The first elections were held in May 1999, resulting in 48 women (out of 129) Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs). Today, following the May 2003 elections, the number of women MSPs has increased to 51, representing 39.5% of the Scottish Parliament. There are 30 women (or 41.1%) out of 73 Constituency MSPs; and 21 women (or 37.5%) out of 56 Regional MSPs, representing an increase of 5.4% from 1999. There are three women Cabinet Ministers (27.3%).

The Welsh Assembly

133. In July 1997, the UK Government published a White Paper, *A Voice for Wales*, outlining proposals for devolution in Wales. These proposals were endorsed in the referendum of 18 September 1997. The elections for the first Assembly were held on 6 May 1999. The assembly has sixty elected Members. Following the May 2003 elections, the proportion of women members of the National Assembly for Wales increased from 41.6% to 50% (30 out of 60 members). 55.5% of women account for Cabinet Ministers (or 5 out of 9 Cabinet Ministers are women).

Women in public appointments

134. In recent years, the Government has undertaken a number of initiatives aimed at increasing women's representation on public bodies, as well as people from ethnic minority backgrounds and people with disabilities. There has been a steady increase in the number of appointments held by women from 26% in 1992 to 34% in 2001. The number of appointments held by people from ethnic minority backgrounds has also increased during this period, from 20% in 1992 to 38% in 2001. In 2001, at least 440 appointments were held by disabled people, and of these 197 were held by women. See tables 7.1-7.2 in annex 2 (article 7, p. 4).

135. Recognising the importance of women and men's equal representation in public life, the Government is intensifying its efforts to increase the number of women in public bodies. All appointments are made on merit, and are monitored by the Independent Commissioner for Public Appointments. The aim is to increase women's representation to 45-50% of the public appointments made by the majority of Government departments by the end of 2005. Women are already engaged in public life at a local level – holding around half of all appointments such as school governors, magistrates or members of health trusts. The Government commissioned research with the aim to gain a deeper understanding of the barriers to women's access to high-level public appointments in order to facilitate their entry. In this context, the Women and Equality Unit (WEU), in collaboration with the Public Appointments Unit, the Women's National Commission, the Equal Opportunities Commission and other stakeholders, has run a national outreach programme that included a

series of seminars to encourage women from a diverse range of backgrounds to make the move from local to national level appointments. These regional seminars provided practical help, information and support to women thinking about applying for a national public appointment. The seminars proved successful were extended to national seminars to target employers (through female Human Resources Managers), women in journalism, trade union women, women in Public Relations and ethnic minority women. The ethnic minority women event aimed to facilitate women's access into public life at national, regional and local levels.

136. A research programme is now underway to evaluate the effectiveness of the seminars and explore in more depth women's views of public appointments and their experience of applying and holding them. Specific research will also be done on the experiences and perceptions of minority ethnic women in public appointments. The WEU has also produced a cascade pack, containing good practice guidance on developing seminars and awareness raising tools for encouraging women to take up public appointments. This will be made available to the devolved assemblies, local government, MPs, employers, public bodies and individuals.

Diversity in public appointments: the Government's commitments

137. The Government is keen to ensure that further and faster progress is made in public appointments and ha two fundamental commitments: (i) equal representation of women and men in public appointments, pro-rat representation of members of ethnic minority groups and increased participation of disabled people; and (ii) us of fair selection procedures which recognise non-traditional career patterns as suitable qualifications fo appointments. In line with these commitments, each central Government department has an individual plan o action including specific time-based targets for increasing the proportion of appointments held by women people from ethnic minority backgrounds and disabled people. The plans were first published in 1998, and ar updated and published each year. Details of the latest plans for action on diversity were published in Februar 2002 in *Public Bodies: Opening Up Public Appointments 2002-2005*. Alongside the action being taken b individual departments to achieve their targets, measures are being taken across Government to increas diversity in public appointments, and promote understanding of the work and value of public bodies. Th Cabinet Office is responsible for promoting best practice with regard to public appointments, working wit departments to enable continuous improvement in the quality and diversity of appointees.

Local Government

138. The Government is following up on its proposals put forward by the 1998 local government White Pap *Modern Local Government: in touch with the People*, that set out changes to political management structure electoral and consultation arrangements, accountability and scrutiny of councils aimed at making loc government more accessible and encouraging more women to stand for election.

Women as local councillors

139. In 2002, representation of women as councillors rose to around 28% of all councillors, a clear increa since 1964 when the proportion was 10%. It should be noted that there are roughly the same numbers of wom in leadership positions as men. The Government hopes to encourage more women to become councillors. Th main problem in recruiting new councillors of any gender or race is the steady decline in the public's interest local affairs and the standing of local government and politics generally. The Government is addressing th through its programme of democratic renewal. It is committed to increasing women's participation in loc decision-making and becoming councillors in due course.

Local Government staff

140. Of all staff working in local government 71% are women (of whom 39% work full-time). Currently, 16 of Chief Executives and Chief Officers are female, illustrating progress since the last report, when only 10 were women. Recognising the need to increase women's representation, local government is involved in seve equal opportunities initiatives aimed at increasing opportunities for female employees. These inclu

Opportunity 2000 and the *Women's Leadership Programme* run by the Local Government Management Board. In 2001, a performance indicator of the percentage of the top 5% of earners who are women in every local authority was introduced, with the aim to measure individual authorities' commitment to equality of opportunity in senior posts.

Northern Ireland

Women in public appointments

141. The Northern Ireland Office (NIO), a Whitehall Department, is bound by the revised Code of Practice on Ministerial Appointments to Bodies, issued in July 2001. The annual report on Northern Ireland Office public appointments (published in the *Northern Ireland Office 2002 Departmental Report, Expenditure Plans and Priorities* — www.nio.gov.uk) demonstrates that at March 2001, the level of female representation in public bodies increased to 41% (March 2000 it was 40%). Of the 14 publicly appointed bodies listed in the report, 4 Chair and 2 Deputy Chair posts were held by women. With the aim to intensify efforts aimed at increasing the number of women in public life, the Northern Ireland Office's Diversity Action Plan, *Opening Up Public Appointments 2002-2005*, states the goal to increase the proportion of public appointments held by women to 45% by 2005.

142. Departments in Northern Ireland have to base their procedures for making appointments on the *Code of Practice and Guidance* (described in the previous report), revised in April 2002, that includes the principle of 'equal opportunities'. Departments are also encouraged to take appropriate action, wherever possible, to attract suitable candidates from all sections of society and this, in turn, should lead to wider representation of women on public bodies. Departments must take care not to unlawfully discriminate against any group of people. The Central Appointments Unit in the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister prepares an annual report on public appointments in Northern Ireland (www.ofmdfmni.gov.uk/publicappointments). The report sets out in detail the number of applications received and appointments made by each of the Northern Ireland Departments and includes an analysis of these figures by gender. The latest figures for the percentage of women currently serving on public bodies in Northern Ireland is almost 32%. Of the 119 publicly appointed bodies in Northern Ireland in December 2002, 35 Chair and 5 Deputy Chair posts are held by women.

143. The Northern Ireland Department for Enterprise, Trade and Investment undertook a specific, targeted outreach initiative to encourage women's participation in Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs), in January 2002. The Department also approached organisations such as the Federation of Small Business, Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Activity and Northern Ireland Congress/Irish Congress Trade Unions as part of its outreach initiative. As a result, over 60% of the applicants were women. Of the 102 applicants short-listed, 51 (50%) were female and 10 (50%) of those applicants interviewed were female. Overall 205 (64%) males and 115 (36%) females applied for the Invest NI Board. 10 (62.5%) males and 6 (37.5%) females were appointed.

District Council

144. There are currently 108 female councillors in the 26 Northern Ireland district councils. This represents an overall percentage of over 18%, an increase of 4% since 1998. Following appointments in June 2002, 4 councils have a woman as Mayor/Chairperson and a further 5 councils have a woman as Deputy Mayor/Vice-Chairperson.

Scotland

Women in public appointments

145. The Scottish Executive is committed to encouraging more women to apply to serve on the boards of Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs). At 1 December 2002, women accounted for 36% of all appointees in

post. Recognising that the previous targets for achieving greater diversity have not secured lasting change, a detailed strategy for improving diversity in public appointments will be drawn up by the new Commissioner for Public Appointments in Scotland (once appointed) and the Executive. The *Public Appointments and Public Bodies etc (Scotland) Bill* currently (at the time of print) before the Scottish Parliament seeks to establish such a Commissioner. The Scottish Executive is already doing a great deal to promote public service more widely, but it will take some time before measures designed to generate more applications from currently under-represented groups have full effect. The Executive continues to promote public service through:

- The creation of a Commissioner for Public Appointments in Scotland with specific responsibility for promoting diversity in public appointments;
- The notification of specific vacancies to a wider variety of interest groups (in addition to advertising in the press);
- The introduction (from 13 May 2002) of a Parliamentary notification system for public appointments; Commissioning or undertaking action with other interested parties to secure a better understanding of diversity-related issues and how to address them;
- Conducting a second tranche of the *Public Appointments Work Shadow Initiative* (launched 30 May 2002);
- Undertaking speaking engagements targeted at under-represented groups; and
- Providing diversity awareness training for officials.

Local Councils

146. In 1999, 22% of councillors in Scotland were women. The Commission on Local Government and the Scottish Parliament recognise the importance of women's participation in decision-making positions, recommending that councils should review how they organise their business so that a wider cross-section of the community could realistically consider taking on the responsibilities of council membership. In this context, the Renewing Local Democracy Working Group put forward a number of recommendations aimed at widening access to council membership, and included consideration of the impact on women's participation in council business. The recommendations that fell under the responsibility of the Council were addressed in the recent Local Government White Paper *Renewing Local Democracy: The Next Steps*. The consultation period on the White Paper finished on 31 July 2002, the Executive is now developing the next steps in relation to legislation and the future governance of councils.

Local Government staff

147. Although there are three women Chief Executives (6%), this represents a 100% increase since 1996. As at June 2001, the percentage of women employed by Scottish Councils was 65% of local authority employees (50% of local authority full-time employees; 90% of local authority part-time employees).

Wales

148. The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to ensuring that public appointments are more representative of the communities they serve by improving diversity. An action plan has been approved, and is being implemented, with the aim to increase the number of applications received from under-represented groups, including women. This strategic approach includes research, capacity building and outreach work. The Voluntary Sector Partnership Council is encouraging the Welsh Assembly Government to promote further its equal pay initiatives, by requiring Unitary Authorities to provide a gender audit of its staff appointments with classification by level of appointment and salary scale, and with information on the composition of the appointment panels. See table 7.5 in annex 2 (article 7, p. 4).

Trade Unions

149. At the end of 2000 there were 226 trade unions in Great Britain with 7.78 million members. In Autumn 2001, 47% of employees who were union members were women. The number of women general secretaries, currently 33, has increased fivefold since 1993, and represents approximately 15% of the total. Women now account for 18 out of 56 members, or 32% of the Trades Union Congress (TUC) General Council. Trade unions are increasingly aware of the need to attract more women members in order to stop a decline in their membership. For this purpose, trade unions are pursuing initiatives to increase women's representation. For instance, the TUC's *New Unionism project*, launched to boost membership across the movement, is targeting growth sectors of the economy: typically female, part-time and non-manual. It should be noted that the Deputy General Secretary and Assistant General Secretary of the TUC are women.

The Civil Service

150. The Civil Service is committed to equality of opportunity for all staff. The Civil Service Management Code states that there must be no unfair discrimination on the basis of age, disability, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, or (in Northern Ireland) community background. In the Autumn of 1999, the Civil Service Management Board pledged to drive forward a new agenda of Civil Service reform. One of the six key themes was 'A dramatic improvement in diversity'. All departments pledged action plans to reflect this commitment. The Diversity Sub-Group set stretching targets for the Senior Civil Service to improve diversity by 2004 – 2005. The targets were set at double the rate of growth in the numbers of women expected on the then current trends. Departments set their own targets for diversity for grades below the Senior Civil Service and Cabinet Office issued guidance on how to set targets to ensure that they were fair, but stretching.

151. Departments were also committed to develop policies to enable staff to achieve a better balance between their work and private lives. Heads of Departments became personally accountable to Ministers on progress against these commitments and an annual report is submitted to the Prime Minister by the Head of the Home Civil Service. In 2000, an independent Civil Service wide diversity survey was carried out to assess staff perception in relation to the management of diversity. The survey demonstrated that the sense of satisfaction with the Civil service as an employer was greater for women than for their male colleagues and that although the majority of women in the Civil Service do not feel that their multiple roles outside the workplace impact their career, some do feel that gender related issues have had an adverse effect on their careers. In January 2002, Cabinet Office issued guidance for departments on Equal Pay. All departments are committed to an equal pay review and to prepare any necessary action plans.

Women with a Disability

152. In 2001, the proportion of permanent staff within the Civil Service with a disability was 3.1 % (this figure excludes the Ministry of Defence). In support of achieving equality of opportunity in the workplace, the Government produced a new guide, *A Practical Guide to Good Practice in the Recruitment of People with Disabilities to the Civil Service*, to promote good practice from advertising recruitment to induction and support, also disseminated through the website (www.diversity-whatworks.gov.uk). A number of Government departments and agencies have registered with the Department for Work and Pension's Positive About Disabled People symbol, making a public commitment to improving opportunities for disabled people. For instance, offering guaranteed interviews to suitably qualified candidates, consulting with employees, advising on ways of retaining people who have become disabled and developing awareness programmes for line managers. Other Government initiatives in this context include the *Workstep* scheme aimed at providing work opportunities for people with disabilities who are unable to carry out the full rage of duties. Workstep applicants for the Civil Service are now exempt from fair and open competition on recruitment. The *Access to Work* scheme provides help for departments and agencies to overcome work-related obstacles faced by disabled people, such as funding adaptations to equipment or premises and meeting additional costs of fares to work. '*Workable in the Civil Service*' aims to enable Government departments and agencies to offer disabled graduates and

undergraduates work placements of between one and twelve months. Nearly 200 students have benefited so far. Moreover, the Government is implementing the Bursary Scheme for Civil Servants with Disabilities that offers a fund of £7,000 to support individuals on a two-year programme of career training and development. The scheme is open to all permanent civil servants with a disability, who have a potential to reach senior management position within the Civil Service. Since the launch of the scheme in 1997, the number of disabled people awarded the Bursary scheme has increased from ten to thirty-one, of whom 52 % were women. For more information on such schemes see articles 3 and 11.

Ethnic minority women

153. The *Pathways* initiative was launched in 2001 to help meet the targets set to increase representation of ethnic minorities in the Senior Civil Service. It provides senior civil service managers from ethnic minority backgrounds with the tools and direction to compete for Senior Civil Service posts. Each programme has 21 participants, with new cohorts starting each year, and four programmes planned. 53% of the first cohort are women.

154. For information on the Government's initiatives to increase the number of women in the Civil Service, including the Senior Civil Service and Fast Stream (graduate entry route for senior Civil Service careers), benchmarking, flexible working and childcare provisions see annex 1 (article 7, pp. 5-6).

Northern Ireland

155. In Northern Ireland on 1 January 2002, women represented over 54% of all non-industrial staff in the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS). The percentage of women at Deputy Principal level increased from 21% in 1999 to 28% in 2002 and the percentage of women at Senior Principal/Principal level increased from 18% in 1999 to 23% in 2002. In May 2002, the NICS announced a goal of at least 19% female representation in administrative posts in the Senior Civil Service by December 2005. Female representation at this level increased from 9% in 1999 to 16% in 2002.

Scotland

156. In Scotland on 1 January 2003, women represented 49% of whole-time equivalent staff in the Scottish Executive, its Agencies and associated Departments. Of these, 32 (0.9%) were from a minority ethnic background. In the senior civil service, women held 59 (29.1%) of the posts. The Scottish Executive enhanced its established equal opportunities policy through the launch of a new Diversity Strategy in November 2000, setting challenging targets to increase the number of women in under-represented grades and aiming to progress gender equality through a number of key objectives (including raising awareness through diversity training, support for part-time workers through a staff network; the extension of a variety of family friendly alternative working patterns, including the piloting of a new job share bank, and a review of current childcare provision). In addition, the Executive will implement a revised bullying and harassment policy and a new strategy on age diversity, including a review of existing retirement age in 2003.

Wales

157. The National Assembly for Wales has a comprehensive policy on equal opportunities and diversity, including initiatives on flexible working hours, part-time working, job sharing, special leave, parental leave, nursery facilities and holiday playcare. The National Assembly is working to mainstream equality policy and diversity into all management practices. An Intranet site is available to all staff providing guidance, information and examples of good practice. Furthermore, the National Assembly plays a proactive role in representing the interests of women, people with disabilities and people from ethnic minorities, and promotes equal opportunities and diversity policies. The National Assembly for Wales has set up a number of internal networks for staff from under-represented groups including women and these will provide a key role in consultation on policies and guidance in the future.

ARTICLE 8: WOMEN AS INTERNATIONAL REPRESENTATIVES

The Diplomatic Service

158. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), which provides the staff to British Diplomatic Missions overseas, has an objective to ensure that staff are free from direct or indirect discrimination and to promote a culture of equal opportunities for all staff. All members of the FCO Board will soon have a personal objective relating to diversity in the FCO, and there is a Board-level champion for women's issues on the Board. The department is continuously reviewing existing equal opportunities policies and re-examining the position of women in the FCO. As part of this process, a target to increase the numbers of women reaching the Senior Management Structure (SMS) to 20 percent by 2005, has been set. A detailed programme of action to improve the prospects for, and to tackle internal cultural barriers to, women in the FCO has also been introduced. The FCO already has in place a series of policies aimed at improving the position of women within the organisation. They include: equal opportunities; promotion of flexible working; facilitation of joint postings; a robust harassment policy; career breaks of up to five years; the option to remain in the UK for ten years to meet domestic commitments; and childcare support, including a workplace nursery.

159. Improved career break schemes, paid maternity leave and flexible working practices should improve the numbers of women who remain in the FCO and compete for jobs at high levels. Recent changes to the scheme have introduced a common focal point for all officers on career breaks, to provide support and career guidance during the break and to try to ensure that women are not disadvantaged as a result of taking a career break. The FCO has introduced a range of objective mechanisms for promotion at different levels, aimed at ensuring equality of opportunity for all, irrespective of gender. Early results from the Assessment and Development Centres (ADCs) for promotion from Band B to Band C and from Band D into the SMS suggest that a balance is being achieved. In 2002, the majority of entrants into the Diplomatic Service were women (109, or 54 percent). In the same year, there were 682 women (35% of the Diplomatic Service total) working overseas; 20 women (8% of the total) were working overseas as Ambassadors or Heads of Mission; and 10 women (13% of the total) were Heads of Departments in the United Kingdom.

Women's Role in Defence

160. The Ministry of Defence is committed to equality of opportunity consistent with the need to maintain combat effectiveness. The majority of posts within the Armed Forces are open to women[13] and their contribution to the operational effectiveness of the Armed Forces is essential. During the reporting period, the Ministry has worked and will continue to work with the Equal Opportunities Commission and discuss the results of further work to examine the wider issues of the employment of women in the Armed Forces. Between 1990 and 2002, the percentage of women in the Armed Forces has increased from 5.5 to 8.3 percent. There has been a gradual increase in women's representation in the UK's regular forces, increasing from 8.2, in 1999, to 9.7 percent, in 2002, for officer-levels and from 7.6 to 7.9 percent for other ranks, during the same period. Since the early 1990s, women have taken on an increasingly wide range of roles and tasks. They have been able to serve as pilots and navigators in attack helicopters and in fast jets, and in all roles on board surface warships, and in the Royal Artillery and Royal Engineers. See table 8.1-8.3 in annex 2 (article 8, page 5-7).

161. Because the Armed Forces do not recruit personnel directly to senior levels, it will take some time before the expansions of roles for women, made during the 1990s, feeds through to the more senior ranks. In April 2002, there was one Commodore and three Captains in the Naval Service, three Brigadiers and seventeen Colonels in the Army, and nine Group Captains in the RAF. After the last extension of roles open to women in 1998, the Ministry of Defence carried out a detailed study into the performance and suitability of women in

[13] In total, women can serve in 73% of posts in the Naval Service, 70% of posts in the Army and 96% of posts in the Royal Air Force. Women now make up more than 8% of the strength of the regular Armed Forces and over 10% of recruits to the enlisted ranks and almost 20% of officer recruits are women.

close-combat roles in order to examine if these roles might be opened to women. Taking into account the study, that resulted the *Women in the Armed Forces Report,* the Ministry of Defence announced, in 2002, that the current restrictions on women serving in close-combat roles could not be lifted.

162. The report and the accompanying summary paper, which together describe the details of the decision, have been made public. In summary, although women are, on average, less able to meet the physical demands of these roles, some women would certainly be able to do so and this was not, in itself, a reason to exclude them. The key issue was whether the inclusion of women in close combat teams could adversely affect the combat effectiveness of those teams in a high-intensity direct fire battle. All the units in question operate primarily in small teams as fire teams or tank crews. The evidence suggested that on operations other than close combat the presence of women in small units does not affect performance detrimentally. However, there was no evidence to show whether this remained the case under the extraordinary conditions of high intensity combat. Given the lack of relevant direct evidence, from either field studies or the experience of other countries, the Secretary of State for Defence concluded that military judgement must form the basis of the decision. The military advice was that under the conditions of a high-intensity, close-quarter battle, group cohesion becomes of much greater significance to team performance and, in such an environment, the consequences of failure could have far reaching and grave consequences. To admit women, therefore, would involve a risk without any offsetting gains in terms of combat effectiveness. From a legal perspective, the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 allows the Armed Forces to exclude women from close combat posts. The judgment of the European Court of Justice in *Sirdar v. the Army Board and the Secretary of State* and relevant European Community equality law upheld that position, subject to a requirement periodically to assess the position.

ARTICLE 9: NATIONALITY

163. UK nationality legislation reflects the principle that men and women have equal rights in this area and there have been no changes since the last report.

Immigration rules concerning marriage

164. UK Immigration Rules permit spouses of British citizens or those present and settled in the UK to enter or remain in the UK for a probationary period of 12 months with no restriction on employment — subject to meeting strict criteria. At the end of this time, settlement will normally be granted, provided the requirements of the Immigration Rules relating to marriage continue to be met. The probationary period, which applies equally to all applicants, is considered an essential safeguard against abuse by those who are prepared to use marriage as a means to obtain settlement in the UK to which they would not otherwise be entitled. The White Paper *Secure Borders, Safe Haven*, published in February 2002 proposes an increase in the probationary period on marriage to 2 years.

165. To assist those subject to immigration control whose marriage breaks down during the probationary year as a result of domestic violence, the Government introduced a domestic violence concession in June 1999. The concession provides for the person to be granted settlement, exceptionally outside the Immigration Rules, if the domestic violence occurred while the marriage was subsisting. Where an application for an order or prosecution is pending, the applicant may be granted further periods of 6 months limited leave to remain, subject to the same conditions, until the outcome of the proceedings is known. The operation of the concession has been monitored over its first two years and the findings are currently being reviewed. The review will include consideration of whether the range of evidence required to meet the criteria should be extended.

Refugees

166. A key element of the Government's commitment as a safe haven for those fleeing persecution is how we help those who have the right to remain here to rebuild their lives and to fulfil their potential as full members of

society. Many refugees[14] find it difficult to make the transition from support to independence, particularly women with children. To facilitate this process, the Government has put into place new co-ordination measures to improve refugees access to education, healthcare and employment, however difficulties still remain. In November 2000, the Government launched the Refugee Integration Strategy *Full and Equal Citizens*, designed to enhance the successful settlement of refugees in the UK and to help them overcome the barriers that they may face which prevent them from achieving their full potential. The integration agenda is taken forward through the National Refugee Integration Forum, drawing together local authorities, Government departments and the voluntary and private sectors to monitor and steer the development of a strategy for integration. It contains a number of sub groups to cover the areas recognised as those needing particular attention if barriers to integration are to be overcome, including accommodation, community development, community safety and racial harassment, education of children, employment and training, health and social care, positive images, research, unaccompanied asylum seeking children.

167. In 2002, each EU Member State was awarded funding to target projects that take into account the needs of vulnerable people. This included victims of torture or rape, people requiring special medical treatment, elderly and disabled people, and in particular, women and children. This has enabled the Government to fund additional projects working to enhance the reception of asylum seekers and the integration of refugees in the UK. Several projects funded under the European Refugee Fund are working in partnership with schools, families and voluntary agencies to enable refugee women, their families and the host communities to develop a sustainable link and relationships.

ARTICLE 10: EDUCATION

The Government's commitment to education

168. Recognising that education opens the door to opportunity for all children, boys and girls alike, the Government is committed to root out inequality and under-achievement and raise standards in all schools and colleges to those of the very best. The Government will deliver an increase in education spending in the UK of £14.7 billion between 2002-03 and 2005. The Government is intensifying its efforts to build an inclusive society by creating opportunities for women, men, girls and boys to develop their learning, realising their potential and achieving excellence in standards of education and levels of skills. To achieve this, the Government has set three objectives: (i) give girls and boys an excellent start in education so that they have a better foundation for future learning; (ii) enable all women and men, girls and boys to develop and to equip themselves with the skills, knowledge and personal qualities needed for life and work; (iii) encourage and enable women and men to learn, improve their skills and enrich their lives. In the UK responsibility for the provision of education is devolved to local education authorities and schools, colleges, and universities. All are bound by the requirements of the *Sex Discrimination Act 1975*, the *Race Relations Act 1976*, and the *Disability Discrimination Act 1995* to ensure equality of opportunity for both women and men. There are many local strategies and policies devised and/or adopted at the local level (for example, by local Learning and Skills Councils, Further Education colleges or other post-16 learning providers) to address the particular needs and aspirations of their local populations.

169. In addition, a number of national strategies, policies and initiatives are designed to increase the participation, retention and achievement of ethnic minority learners and thus ethnic minority women. These include:

- Introduction, from May 2002, of the requirement under the *Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000* for further (and higher) education institutions to prepare a written statement of its policies for promoting race

[14] The term "refugee" are recognised refugees who are granted indefinite leave to remain within the terms of the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees or those given four years exceptional leave to remain as persons in need of protection in accordance with obligations under the ECHR and the Convention against Torture.

equality, procedures for fulfilling them and mechanisms for assessing the impact of its policies on the admission and progress of students and staff;

- Development and implementation of a 'Widening Adult Participation' strategy by the Learning and Skills Council. This strategy will complement the Council's 'Equality and Diversity' strategy;
- Development and implementation of appropriate actions in response to the recommendations made by the Commission for Black Staff in Further Education. These include steps to increase the number of ethnic minority senior managers and to raise awareness of equality and diversity issues across the sector thereby providing an appropriate environment and identifiable role models to help attract and retain prospective ethnic minority learners;
- The Department's continued funding of the Ethnic Minority Student Achievement Grant (now managed and administered by the Learning and Skills Council) designed to raise participation and achievement of ethnic minority students in post-16 learning;
- Introduction, as part of the new further education strategy '*Success for All*', of Strategic Area Reviews through which the Learning and Skills Council can encourage more ethnic minority providers to enter the market and thus help attract prospective ethnic minority learners;
- Development and implementation by the Learning and Skills Council of Equality and Diversity Impact Measures which, when set alongside existing performance monitoring and quality improvement procedures, will help monitor progress and identify issues that need to be addressed to widen participation.

Sure Start

170. As part of the Government's efforts to implement a holistic and integrated approach to early education, childcare, family services and equal opportunity for young children and families, the 2002 Spending Review combined the former Sure Start and Early Years and Childcare Units into a new single interdepartmental Unit, now designated as the Sure Start Unit. The Review also unveiled a combined £1.5 billion budget by 2005-06 for Sure Start, Early Education and Childcare programmes within which there will be a more than doubling in childcare spending. The Unit is responsible for establishing children's centres in disadvantaged areas, combining high quality childcare with early education, family support, health services and training and employment advice. Centres will build on existing programmes like Sure Start, Neighbourhood Nurseries and Early Excellence Centres, bringing high quality integrated services to the heart of those communities. The Unit also supports the existing and planned 524 Sure Start local programmes, 9 mainstreaming pilots and 46 Mini Sure Starts in rural areas and pockets of deprivation. To date, Sure Start local programmes have helped around 350,000 children to have a better start in life by combining good quality childcare with early education, family and health support, and advice on training and employment. By the end of summer 2003, there will be 524 local programmes operational around the country, helping up to 400,000 children in the most disadvantaged areas, including a third of all those living in poverty. (For more information on childcare, see articles 11 and 13). The early years and childcare workforce is predominately female and considerable activity has been focused on improving the status of the profession, including mounting a high profile recruitment campaign, developing a better-trained workforce and new coherent career and qualifications pathways, so there are no unnecessary barriers to career progression.

Early Education

171. Children's experiences in their early years are critical and the Government has recognised this period as a distinct phase of education, introducing the Foundation Stage for children from 3 to 5 years of age aimed at developing key skills, complemented by Early Learning Goals. Challenging discrimination and stereotypes is part of the Foundation Stage Curriculum. The Government has funded a major expansion in free early education. From September 1998, access to a free part-time place with a state, private or voluntary sector provider, has been guaranteed to every four year old, if requested by the parents. Around 70% of 3 year olds currently enjoy this entitlement and all of them will by April 2004.

School (5-16 years of age)

172. Details of the National Curriculum, introduced in 1989, are illustrated in previous reports. The New General Certificate in Secondary Education (GCSE, exam-levels taken at the age of 16) in 8 vocational subject areas (including engineering and manufacturing) were introduced in September 2002. These new qualifications are targeted at a wide range of abilities and both girls and boys are actively encouraged to take advantage of them. In September 2000, the Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) framework was set up for girls and boys aged 5-16 to enhance their knowledge, skills and understanding in taking responsibility for themselves; to recognise the effects of stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination of any kind (for example racial, gender or disability) and to develop the skills to challenge them assertively, to show respect for others and develop the self-awareness and confidence needed for life. The implementation of the PSHE framework is supported by guidance on sex and relationship education, safety education and financial capability issued by the Department for Education and Skills, as well as the guidance issued by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) in April 2000. The revised National Curriculum has enhanced opportunities for girls and boys to learn about issues such as violence against women. The Government produced *Does sex make a difference?* – a gender equality pack for young people, published to coincide with International Women's Day, on 8 March 2003. The pack highlights opportunities within PSHE and Citizenship and includes a lesson plan on domestic violence to help teachers to explore the issue in the classroom.

Sport in Schools

173. A joint Department for Education and Skills and Department for Media Culture and Sport Public Service Agreement target was announced on 15 July 2002 and seeks to enhance the take up of sporting opportunities by 5-16 year old girls and boys by increasing the percentage of children who spend at least 2 hours each week on Physical Education and school sport within and beyond the curriculum to 75% by 2006. This commitment extends to girls and boys. *Nike* and the *Youth Sport Trust Girls in Sport Partnership Project,* a school-based project, is assisting teachers to develop forms of physical education and sport to enable more girls to lead active lifestyles, by tackling such issues as changing facilities and sportswear. To date more than 1000 secondary schools have applied for the *Nike* and *Youth Sport Trust* training programme.

Retention

174. In 2000-01, around 17% of permanent exclusions from schools were exclusions of girls. The Government is working to address exclusions from schools through a number of initiatives. The Government is now focusing on promoting social responsibility and improving behaviour and attendance rather than solely focusing on targets for reducing permanent exclusions. Since 1999, all Local Education Authorities have been developing out-of-school provision for permanently excluded girls and boys. The Government is achieving results in this area as illustrated by the annual report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools for 2002 that highlighted improving standards in the education of excluded girls and boys. As part of the Government initiatives to improve school retention, in October 2001, the Department for Education and Skills published a detailed guidance on the education of teenage parents, to help schools and local education authorities with the practicalities of supporting parents and pregnant girls of school age. The guidance is widely disseminated through the internet (http://www.dfes.gov.uk/schoolageparents) and has been distributed to all Reintegration Officers and concerned Local Education Authorities. The Guidance states that pregnancy should never be a reason for exclusion from school, a point that is re-iterated in the new *Guidance on Exclusions,* published by the Department for Education and Skills in January 2003. (Also see below and article 12 for details on the Government's Teenage Pregnancy Strategy).

National curriculum assessment arrangements

175. National curriculum assessment arrangements are explained in the previous report. The assessment helps monitor schools' success in offering the full National Curriculum to girls and boys through the annual Office of Standards in Education (OFSTED) reports, and identify any gender discrepancies. The results in 2001 of pupils

at Key Stage 1 (age 5-7) showed that in all subjects, the percentage of girls who achieved the expected level or above was higher than the percentage of boys. At Key Stage 2 (age 7-11), girls outperformed boys in English tests and for both mathematics and science, girls and boys had a very similar percentage distribution. In all Key Stage 3 (age 11-14) core subjects, the percentage of girls achieving the expected level was the same as or higher than the percentage of boys. Girls also outperformed boys in the Key Stage 3 non-core subjects.

Examination achievements at age 15, 16 and 18 (GCSE, GCE Advanced and equivalent)

176. The proportion of both girls and boys leaving school with a General Certificate in Secondary Education (GCSE, taken at age 15-16) or equivalent qualifications has increased steadily over the last 25 years, with more girls than boys leaving school with GCSE qualifications. In 2000-01, 96% of girls and 94% of boys in their last year of compulsory education had graded results (compared to 82% and 80%, respectively, in 1975-76). Moreover, there has been a marked improvement in achievement at GCSE level overall, with girls consistently outperforming boys in the attainment of higher grades. There has been a 21% increase from 1985 to 2001 among girls who gained at least one GCSE (grades A-C) or Scottish Certificate of Education Standard Grades (1-3) (from 59% in 1985 to 80% in 2001). Since the 1980s girls have outperformed boys at GCE Advanced or A level examinations (taken at age 18). In particular, girls are achieving slightly higher level passes in mathematics, physics, computer studies, design and technology, geography and physical education — although the number of girls taking these subjects is lower than the number of boys. The Department for Education and Skills is working with the Department of Trade and Industry in supporting initiatives aimed at encouraging more girls to continue with physics and mathematics beyond 16, as well as science and engineering (see below and article 5 on stereotyping). More girls than boys took A-level English, social studies, biological sciences, art and design and French in 2000-01. See table 10.1 in annex 2 (article 10, p. 8).

Higher Education

177. In the last 30 years the UK has witnessed an increase in the numbers of those participating in higher education. In 2001-02, over 2.2 million students were studying within the higher education system, of whom 1.3 million were studying full time. Over this period there has been a significant change in the gender balance of those undertaking higher education. In 1970-71 there were twice as many men as women in higher education. Since then, women's participation has increased steadily and in 2001-02 women made up 55% of enrolled students in higher education — in line with demographic representation. See table 10.2 in annex 2 (article 10, p. 8). An increasing emphasis on more flexible learning systems by both further education colleges and universities, including credit accumulation and transfer schemes, part-time studies and summer teaching are particularly beneficial for women returning to the labour market. Women account for around 73% of participants on Access to Higher Education courses. Some courses are designed specifically to help women gain entry into courses in technology and science, information and communication technology and financial management as well as other subjects where women are traditionally under-represented. Although women are under-represented in certain sciences and engineering, within the sciences women outnumber men in biological sciences, veterinary science, agriculture and related subjects. Moreover, women's participation in sciences has increased in recent years, reaching 48% in 2002 while numbers of men have been relatively static.

Higher Education Qualifications

178. From 1991-92 to 2001-02, the proportion of women undergraduate qualifiers increased from 46% to 57%. The proportion of women postgraduate qualifiers also increased from 43% in 1991-92 to 55% in 2001-02. In subject categories the greatest differences in numbers of student qualifiers, were in the following subjects: Engineering and Technology; Mathematical and Computer Sciences; and Architecture, Building and Planning (where men outnumbered women graduates); Subjects Allied to Medicine; Education; and Social Sciences (where women graduates outnumbered men). An analysis of the quality of the qualifications obtained reveals that more women achieved 'good' degrees (defined as upper seconds and first class degrees) than men. The Government is working to encourage female students to graduate in Engineering, Technology and Computer Sciences (for details see below and article 5). See tables 10.3-10.5 in annex 2 (article 10, page 9-10).

Career and education guidance

179. From September 1998, secondary schools in England and Wales are required to provide a programme of careers education for all young people aged 14-16, with the aim to enable girls and boys to develop career management skills so that they can take advantage of the opportunities open to them. The DfES is developing a national specification for careers education and guidance to help schools improve the quality and consistency of their careers education programmes, including specific learning outcomes on career and gender stereotyping. The Department publishes a range of occupational guidance material to help pupils choose their career by offering an insight into particular industries or areas of work. A conscious effort is made to include case studies that challenge stereotyping and encourage young women to consider non-traditional fields of education, training and employment.

180. In Scotland, a Career Framework paper to encourage greater coherence in provision for careers education provision was produced by Learning and Teaching Scotland in November 2001. This paper highlights the place of career education in both primary and secondary schools and suggests a series of possible learning outcomes. Scottish Ministers statutory obligation to secure provision for information, advice and guidance services to young people at school is, since 1 April 2002, delivered through the new national Career agency, Careers Scotland.

The Role of Connexions

181. Connexions is a radical new approach to guiding and supporting girls and boys through their teenage years, so that they make the best possible transition to adulthood and working life. The Service has subsumed the role of the former careers services in England to provide impartial advice and guidance to young women and men on learning and career choices. Within the context of a universal service, a priority of the Service is to reduce the number of 16-18 year olds who are not in education, training or employment. The Connexions Service offers advice to young women and men on educational choices, vocational options, discrimination and gender stereotyping, health problems, family and relationship problems, to enable them to realise their full potential. The Service adopts a best practice approach in relation to gender stereotyping that includes the following elements: (i) the organisation ensures adequate advocacy and support mechanisms for those considering "non-traditional" options; (ii) all resources and materials, including those produced "in-house", reflect the local population and promotes positive images on gender; and (iii) young women and men are equipped to recognise and counter discriminatory behaviour.

182. The Service contributes to achieving social inclusion targets such as reducing the incidence of teenage pregnancy and drug misuse (also see article 12). It is a major player in addressing social exclusion among young women and men – with an emphasis on detecting early signs and preventing escalation. The Connexions Service aims to reach out to and help make the links for young women and men at the margins, or at risk of being marginalised, helping them reach their full potential and make a successful transition to adult life. Extending opportunity and equality of opportunity is one of the eight key principles of the Connexions Service. Each Connexions Service will have to demonstrate that it meets 5 broad equal opportunity principles outlined in the *Equal Opportunities Best Practice Principles* contained in the ***Business Planning Guidance*** used by Connexions Partnerships. These are obviously wider than gender stereotyping and cover the entire equal opportunities and diversity agenda. The Connexions Service works with the Equal Opportunities Commission, the Commission for Racial Equality and the Disability Right Commission, amongst others, to help ensure the Service is designed to meet the needs of all young people.

Teenage Pregnancy Strategy

183. Connexions has a key role to play in supporting the implementation of the Government's Teenage Pregnancy Strategy by working in partnership with other agencies to reduce the number of teenage conceptions and ensure that teenage parents receive the support they need and are re-integrated into learning. The

Connexions Service ensures young people have access to information and advice on sexual health example, ensuring young people are aware of where they can access contraceptive advice in their local are confident in accessing those services if they need to and are reassured about the confidentiality arrange for those services. It also provides intensive, specialist support to pregnant teenagers and teenage pare particular by helping them to access health and support services and remain engaged in learning or Guidance on Connexions and teenage pregnancy, as part of the *'Working Together'* series, was issued i 2001. Connexions Service National Unit (CSNU), the Teenage Pregnancy Unit and Sure Start jointly pro this. The *Working Together – Connexions and Teenage Pregnancy* guide sets out the principles that ought behind joint working to deliver services to teenage parents. It focuses on the links that need to be deve between Connexions and Teenage Pregnancy Co-ordinators and Re-integration Officers, and in particul the interface between the role of the Connexions personal adviser and the Sure Start Plus Adviser and fulfilling similar roles.

184. CSNU is in the process of finalising an update to the *Working Together – Connexions and Te Pregnancy Guide* entitled *'Making a Difference — Emerging Practice – Connexions and Teenage Pregn* This document is for practitioners working in the field of teenage pregnancy – both within the Conne Service and its partner agencies. It builds on the 'Working Together – Connexions and Teenage Pregn guidance published in 2001 and describes the crucial role that the Connexions Service is continuing to p supporting the achievement of the Government's Teenage Pregnancy Strategy. It provides:

- updates on the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy;
- examples of emerging practice and case studies from Connexions Partnerships;
- examples of emerging practice from the Sure Start Plus initiative currently being piloted in 20 areas.

The evidence indicates that innovative and creative solutions are being developed to meet the challenge Government's teenage pregnancy targets. There is a clear emphasis on the importance of multi-agency wo and of collaboration between the Connexions Service and other agencies, including Teenage Pregnanc ordinators (TPCs), Reintegration Officers (ROs) and Sure Start Plus Advisers. It is envisaged tha publication will be ready for publication in May. For more information on the Government's *Te Pregnancy Strategy* see article 12.

Sexual health and reproductive education

185. Furthermore, for the first time, the Government has provided a National Curriculum framework to su schools in this area. Sex and relationship education, which must include teaching about HIV/ AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases, is compulsory in all maintained secondary schools. To be effective it include teaching about relationships, love and care and the responsibilities of parenthood as well a Government guidance recommends that all primary schools should have a programme tailored to the ag physical and emotional maturity of the children. Effective sex and relationship education is essential if people are to make responsible and well informed decisions about their life. It does not encourage early s experimentation but enables young people to mature, to build up their confidence and self-esteem understand the reasons for delaying sexual activity (for more information on this see article 12).

Financial support for students

Full-time students

186. Since 1999 the Government has introduced a number of grants for mature students with children, a particular lone parents, to help with the costs of taking up a course of Higher Education. These include to replace lost benefits, such as school meals grant and childcare grants (providing grants to cover up to 8 the actual costs of formal childcare costs (to a maximum of £170 per week in 2002-03). In addition, since the Government has quadrupled the level of funding provided to Universities and Higher Education Institu

to assist students with financial hardship during the academic year. The Government directs Higher Education Institutions to give priority to students with children when administering those funds to cover unexpected cases of financial hardship during the academic year.

Part-time students

187. The Government has introduced a range of financial support for part-time students also, including financial support to help cover tuition fee costs, loans to help cover the additional costs of study, and specific grants to help disabled students undertake higher education. These new elements of financial support will be of particular help to women, who remain more likely to have sole or main responsibility for caring for children, and will help to remove financial obstacles which prevent women from taking up Higher Education opportunities.

Learner support funding

188. With the aim to prevent drop out from education due to financial problems and help promote equal opportunities, the Government provides through the Learner Support Funding (LSF) a mixture of general and specific funding for young people who are at risk of not continuing their education. General support is available for books and equipment and specific funds are available for childcare, residential and transport costs. The Institute of Employment Studies has conducted an evaluation of the learner support funds. Evidence so far demonstrates that 9.8% of students (aged 16-19) in further education are benefiting from the funds, with ethnic minorities, those with learning difficulties and the disabled using the funds disproportionately. Recognising that students with childcare needs are more likely to have fewer or no qualifications, the Government is working to provide them with appropriate childcare funding. Specific childcare funding arrangements in Further Education were introduced in 2000 and replaced a tariff points system that rationed the funds available. The arrangements have been well received and are proving effective in general Further Education Colleges, but were less so in the smaller School 6th Forms and Sixth form Colleges, mainly due to the relatively low numbers of students and the allocation formula used to distribute the funds. Therefore during 2002-03 the LSC tested new arrangements for providing childcare support to students in these smaller institutions. This pilot scheme currently allocates funding of up to £4000 per year for 2002-03, rising to a maximum of £5000 per year in 2003-04.

International comparisons

189. Findings from the recent OECD study of 15 year olds, published in *Knowledge and Skills for Life* (OECD, 2001) under the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), illustrate that the UK appears to provide a learning environment that benefits both genders equally. Students in the UK achieve high mean scores in reading, mathematical and scientific literacy, but with limited gender differences.

Status of women teachers

190. The Teacher Training Agency (TTA) is specifically charged with ensuring equal opportunities for access to the teaching profession and to encourage institutions to provide this in their admission arrangements for students who have the qualities to become effective teachers, irrespective of age, sex, race, experience or background. In order to provide a single national focus for school leadership development and research and offer a range of training and development activities for school leaders, the Government set up the National College for School Leadership (NCSL), in 2000. Aspiring heads undertake the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) and the proportion of women taking this qualification is an improvement on the proportion of women currently in headship. In the latest recruitment round for NPQH, 63% of candidates were women. NCSL is reviewing the take-up of leadership and headship training programmes, including by gender and aims to increase the pool of potential school leaders, particularly those from under-represented groups. As one of its actions, it launched the first pilot of *Women in Leadership and Management* in November 2002. Women are well represented in, and continue to be attracted to teaching. In 2001, 69% of full-time

regular qualified teachers in maintained schools in England were women. Women outnumbered men in higher-level positions (Head and Deputy-Head level). In 2000-2001, in the maintained schools sector in England, 680 men were promoted from full time regular qualified teacher to head teacher as opposed to 1410 women[15]. Moreover, the Government spending plans include an additional £330 million to 2003-04 to underpin the human resource strategies in Higher Education institutions that have undertaken to address equal opportunities for their staff. They are supported by the sector's Equality Challenge Unit, one of whose main tasks is to improve the recruitment, retention and career progression of women in academic life. See table 10.6 in annex 2 (article 10, p. 10).

Continuing Education

Adult and Community Learning (ACL)

191. The ACL is an important element of the Government's priorities to tackle poverty, social exclusion and promote neighbourhood renewal. Almost 75% of learners under this initiative are women. In 2001, the Government established the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to replace the Further Education Funding Council and the 72 Training and Enterprise Councils. The LSC is responsible for planning and funding all post 16 learning (except Higher Education) in England including school sixth form provision, further education, work-based training for young women and men, and adult and community learning. In 2002, around 58% of the learners on Council funded Further Education and work-based learning provision were females. Although the statistics are not directly comparable, almost three quarters of the learners under ACL provision are women. In 2003-04, the LSC will receive nearly £6 billion for adult learning, which includes the key elements of local education authority ACL, family learning, neighbourhood learning and the Adult and Community Learning Fund.

192. For more information on Government action in this area including literacy and numeracy, family learning and lifelong learning programmes see annex 1 (article 10, p. 7).

Northern Ireland

193. The Government is implementing a programme of expansion of pre-school education with the aim of providing a year of free pre-school education for every child, if requested by the parents. The statutory curriculum introduced in 1990 is described in the previous report. The Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment is currently conducting a major review of the curriculum with a view to meeting the educational needs of girls and boys, women and men in this millennium. Relationships and Sexuality education is included on a statutory basis within the curriculum through Science, Health Education and other subject areas as appropriate.

Early Years Development Fund

194. The early Years Development Fund, (EYDF) has £1,467,000 available annually from the Government and supports initiatives to improve and extend early years services, to improve the quality of provisions and practice, and to advance training and research. It is focussed on children including children with special needs, and targeted at families experiencing disadvantage or living in areas of high social or economic deprivation including those in rural isolation. EYDF is administered through the Family Policy Unit, in the Northern Ireland Office.

[15] Database of teacher records 2000.

Examination Achievements

195. In Northern Ireland the proportion of girls and boys leaving school with GCSE-level qualifications or equivalent qualifications has increased over the last 13 years, with the rate for girls consistently higher than that for boys. In 1987-88, 84% of girls and 73% of boys left school with GCSE qualifications, and by 2000-2001 the comparable figures increased to 96% and 92% respectively. At GCSE level there has been a marked improvement in achievement generally and girls consistently outperform boys in the attainment of higher grades. Between 1987-88 and 2000-2001 the proportion of girls gaining at least one GCSE at grades A* to C has risen from 67% to 84%, while the comparable figures for boys were 53% and 73% respectively. At the higher level of GCSE attainment (5+ GCSE's A* to C), a similar pattern emerges with girls outperforming boys. In 1987-88, 41% of girls attained this higher level, increasing to 66% in 2000-2001, while the figures for boys were 32% and 50%, respectively. Thus, although both girls and boys have improved, girls are further ahead of boys. When attainment in Northern Ireland at A Level and equivalent is examined, girls still outperform boys. In 1987-88, 29% of girls left school with at least one A Level or equivalent whereas 23% of boys left school with the same qualification. By 2000-2001, the proportion of girls leaving with this qualification had risen to 46% while boys had risen to 32%. The proportion of 16 year olds in Northern Ireland without GCSE's is, consistently, the lowest in the United Kingdom, although Northern Ireland does have a lot of young people with low qualifications and therefore a big gap between the lowest and highest attainers. In response to this the Department of Education is taking steps to improve standards of literacy and numeracy in boys and girls in schools and to implement a support programme aimed at helping underachieving schools.

Initiatives to improve education standards for girls and boys

196. The Government is committed to providing all girls and boys from all backgrounds and circumstances the best possible opportunity to develop their skills. A wide range of school improvement strategies are in place as part of the School Improvement Programme, with the aim of raising standards and in particular to raise literacy and numeracy standards. Such standards are steadily improving in the primary sector as measured by end of Key Stage 2 assessment. In the post-primary sector there is not yet clear evidence of sustained improvement but it should be noted that there has been some improvement in Key Stage 3 outcomes for 2000-01 and 2001-02. The Department of Education, in conjunction with its educational partners, has carried out an internal review of the literacy and numeracy strategy and recognises that there is a need for a more co-ordinated approach in relation to the implementation of this strategy, alongside those for the school support programme, curriculum and assessment arrangements and educational technology. A new strategy group, made up of all the educational partners, has been established to take forward in a coherent way, the findings from on-going reviews.

197. Other initiatives aimed at improving the education for girls and boys include the School Support Programme (SSP), which provides schools with a period of intensive professional and modest financial support for self-improvement measures. For a small number of post-primary schools, that are serving areas of social deprivation, a more intensive period of support has been instigated. The emphasis remains, however, on empowering the schools to identify and take control of their own situation and take action to bring about improvements. The purpose of the Good Practice Initiative is to provide additional resources to schools, which have demonstrated success, to enhance their capacity to achieve further improvement. The aim is to provide an opportunity for the development, recognition and celebration of good practice in schools and for its wider dissemination throughout all schools. The Discipline Strategy, published in February 1998, provides for additional support for schools and girls and boys with all aspects of discipline problems, including truancy, which may lead to suspensions and expulsions. Implementation is ongoing and nearly all of the key elements of the strategy are now in place.

Women Teachers

198. Women in Northern Ireland continue to form the majority of the teaching force. At present, 74% of schoolteachers in Northern Ireland are women. In Northern Ireland between 1999 and 2001, the proportion of both principal and vice-principal posts held by women increased. In 2001 women held 43% of principal posts

and 70% of vice-principal posts in primary schools, compared with 40% and 68%, respectively, in 1999. In Northern Ireland the percentage of female candidates who completed the Professional Qualification for Headship (PQH NI) pilot project was 43%.

Further and Higher Education

199. Women now account for over 60% of all NI Higher Education student enrolments, 61% of undergraduate enrolments and 57% of postgraduate enrolments. The number of women enrolling on full time Higher Education courses has increased by 4% between 1998-99 and 2000-01. The number of women enrolled on part-time courses has increased by 10% since 1998-99 compared with a 3% growth in male part-time numbers. The majority of Northern Ireland domiciled students gaining Higher Education qualifications in 2000-01 were female. The proportions of male and female first degree graduates attaining first class honours were broadly similar (7%). A larger proportion of Northern Ireland women first degree graduates achieved upper second class honours degrees (52%) than their male counterparts (40%).

School age mothers

200. The Department for Education was allocated additional resources from the Executive Programme Children's Fund in 2001 to develop a regional programme of support for pregnant schoolgirls and school-age mothers (SAM Programme). The programme addresses the educational, social and personal development needs of these young women while they adjust to their changed circumstances. Young women wishing to continue in education after the programme are supported with childcare services. A key element of the programme is the provision of social support by developing informal peer networks and 'non-judgemental' support and advice. Underpinning the project is the belief that completion of formal education provides enhanced life opportunities for both the young woman and her baby and where the young woman wishes to continue in education on completion of the SAM Programme she should be supported in doing this. By February 2002 some 43 young women had been referred and programmes arranged at 5 locations. Some 28 young women participated in the SAM Programme and 15 received home tuition. A poster campaign and website were launched in November 2002 with a view to making the programme more widely known and accessible.

Scotland

201. There is no statutory national curriculum in Scotland. However, the Scottish Executive has set National Priorities in Education providing a national vision towards which all education authorities and schools are now working. One of the National Priorities is to raise standards of educational attainment for all in schools, especially in the core skills of literacy and numeracy, and to achieve better levels in national measures of achievement including examination results. Another National Priority is to promote equality and help every pupil benefit from education. Moreover, the *Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000*, puts a duty on education authorities to prepare and publish an *Annual Statement of Education Improvement Objectives*, describing how they will encourage equal opportunities and in particular observance of equal opportunity requirements in school education. Local authorities published their first Statements illustrating how they plan to meet these objectives in 2001.

202. The main development in school education since the last report is the introduction of the new National Qualifications (NNQ, post-age16) courses phased in from 1999-2000 to replace SCE Higher and Certificate of Sixth Year Studies (CSYS). Full implementation is not required until 2004. NNQs are intended to maximise participation, improve attainment and enable female and male students to reach their full educational potential. The Scottish Executive is reviewing Physical Education in schools and the issue of promoting greater female participation may feature in that review. As part of its efforts to encourage young women to take science-related subjects, the Scottish Executive has organised a major international conference on science education in schools. Keynote speakers included senior female scientists and researchers. The conference also considered the role of women in science and measures needed to broaden the appeal of science for female teachers and female school pupils.

203. Full provision of a free, part-time pre-school education place for all 3 and 4 year olds whose parents required it has now been achieved. From April 2002, the Standards in Scotland's Schools Act 2000 placed a new duty on local authorities to secure pre-school education for all eligible children, to cover all 3 and 4 year-olds resident in an authority's area. The Sure Start Scotland programme provides targeted support to families with very young children aged 0-3 years, with a focus on the most vulnerable and deprived families. The programme aims to improve children's emotional and social development, health and their ability to learn, as well as to strengthen families and communities. £19 million has been allocated to local authorities in 2002-03 to work in partnership with health services and relevant voluntary organisations. Resources available for the Sure Start Scotland programme will be £23.1 million in 2003-04, £35 million in 2004-05 and £50 million in 2005-06. Over 9,000 additional children received support in the first year of implementation of Sure Start Scotland (1999-00), increasing to over 15,000 additional children in the second year (2000-01). During this period over 6,000 additional parents were supported.

Attainment

204. The 2000-01 analysis of Scottish School Leavers and their Qualifications shows that a higher proportion of females than males leaving publicly funded schools achieved passes at all levels, except three or more passes at Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level 7. The Scottish Executive commissioned a research project, which looked at the factors influencing the relative attainment of girls and boys, published in September 2001. Among other things, the research emphasised that factors affecting pupil performance are complex, and that gender issues must be considered within the context of other sources of inequality, such as social background. A follow up research project that will look at the intervention methods employed by education authorities and schools to tackle gender inequality will be carried out after 2003.

205. A substantial amount of work has been done to widen access to further education particularly for those in disadvantaged groups and over 65,000 new further education places have been created since 1998-99, while 2,800 additional funded places have been announced for Higher Education in the period from 1999 to 2003-04. Participation in further and higher education by women has increased over the last three years. In the academic year 2000-01, almost 280,000 women were enrolled in programmes of study in further education colleges accounting for 57% of enrolments; and 105,900 women in programmes in higher education institutions (56% of enrolments). This compares with 233,044 further education college (5%) and 101,364 higher education institution enrolments (55%) by women in 1998-99.

Child Poverty Package for Lone Parents

206. The Scottish Executive attaches great importance to assisting lone parents in education and employment. Eradicating child poverty within this generation is one of the Executive's long-term targets, shared with the UK Government, and one important way to achieve this is by assisting lone parents, the majority of whom are female, into further and higher education. This should lead to better job opportunities, better incomes and a better way of life for their children. In July 2001, the Executive launched a three year (2001-04) £24 million package of initiatives to assist lone parents take advantage of further and higher education opportunities by making it easier for them to address the difficulties associated with the cost and supply of childcare. This package is estimated to benefit around 6,500 students. For the first time in Scotland, lone parents in full-time higher education can claim a £1,000 grant per annum towards the cost of registered childcare, from an allocated fund of £8.5 million. To support out of school childcare provision in disadvantaged areas, £8 million was awarded to local authorities. These funds should help to sustain around 1500 to 2000 places. To meet locally identified needs for lone parents, £7.5 million was made available over the three years for further education colleges to widen childcare provision. The package was launched alongside a new information leaflet for lone parents, entitled *Can I Afford to Go to College?*, containing all relevant information for lone parents. This information is also widely disseminated through the internet (www.scotland.gov.uk/library3/misc/lpac-00.asp). Lifelong learning also has a key role to play in enriching the lives of older people. The Scottish Executive is working to encourage learning in order to develop the skills required to lead a fulfilling life and the skills needed to remain in the labour market. The Scottish Executive has widened access with over 7000 women from

minority ethnic backgrounds enrolling in further education colleges, and 5,434 in higher education institution in the 2000-01 academic year.

Wales

207. In line with the *Government of Wales 1998 Act* the Department for Training and Education in the Nation Assembly for Wales is keenly aware of the role of education and training in supporting equality of opportunit The *Learning Country: A Comprehensive Education and Lifelong Learning Programme to 2010 in Wal* detailed the initiatives aimed at supporting and developing education and training for women and men, gir and boys in Wales. This document examines ways to assure equality through wider access and participation ar ultimately to work to ensure equality of attainment and opportunity in life. Other major strategic documen have included The Skills and Employment Action Plan The National Assembly is currently consulting on document *Learning Country: Learning Pathways 14-19* (year olds). The aim is to increase opportunities f young people, enabling them to achieve their full and individual potential. The key to this is providing choi and to extend learning beyond school and college. It is recognised that access for all is important and that th issues of gender segregation and stereotyping need to be addressed.

208. Gender imbalance is considered within the context of equal opportunity in general. Future directio include supporting Governing Bodies of schools, colleges and universities to adopt an open and inclusiv approach to the construction of their own memberships and for the staff teams of those institutions. In additio to this the Higher Education Institutions are being encouraged to undertake equal pay reviews following EO guidelines. Widening access and participation is a key overall objective for the Assembly. In both Highe Education and Further Education, female learners outnumber male (55% of Higher Education learners a female and 64% of FE). In both Higher Education and Further Education (though in Further Educatio institutions in particular) women are strongly represented amongst mature learners. Retention and completio rates do not materially differ between men and women though there continue to be marked differences i subject choice. The National Assembly is on target to achieve its objective of a part time place in early yea settings for all children at three years of age. Making this available to parents if they require it, allows thos with parental responsibility the opportunity to pursue career and educational routes. At the other end of th education path the new Assembly Learning Grant offers means tested grant support to learners at further an higher education levels for both full time and part time students.

Attainment

209. At Key stage 1 to A level, females out-perform males. ACCAC will provide guidance on the scope withi the National Curriculum for Wales for promoting equal opportunities and the understanding of diversity. Th Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales 2000-01 notes tha education providers are becoming more aware of meeting the needs of all learners and generally good progres has been made. The report however, stresses that improvements need to continue and that the systems need t be monitored. It is suggested that the expectations of both teachers and learners continue to be challenged o gender stereotyping. New data collection systems across the range of education and lifelong learning are bein introduced to collect data at individual learner level. This will give a stronger and more precise evidence bas for formulating future policy and for evaluation of what works.

Teachers

210. Within the teaching profession women have always formed a large part of the workforce. Of all teachers i 1990-91 63% were female, this increased to 68% in 2001-02. However, they have traditionally remained in th classroom and have not taken a managerial role, some headway has now been made against this trend. O primary head teachers in 1990-91 41% were female, this increased to 53% in 2001-02, for secondary hea teachers the figures effectively doubled from 8% to 16%. Overall for head teachers the figures for females hav increased from 25% to 35%. In Higher Education institutions 44% of teaching and research staff are women.

ARTICLE 11: EMPLOYMENT

Women's participation in the labour market

211. The Government recognises that women make a crucial contribution to the economy, both in their role as workers and carers, and is fully committed to equal opportunities in the labour market, encouraging family-friendly employment policies, and to improving childcare packages to encourage those parents who wish to work to do so. One of the most important changes in UK society in recent decades has been women's increased participation in the labour market. The proportion of women in the labour force has been increasing and this trend is likely to continue. In 1971 women of working age (16-59 years) made up 38% of the labour force, this figure increased to 45% in 2002[16]. According to the Spring 2002 Labour Force Survey, there are around 12.2 million women of working age in employment in the UK. Between Spring 1992 and Spring 2002, the employment rate for white women in the UK increased by 7% compared with an increase of 2% for ethnic minority women over the same period. Moreover, the number of people in the workforce increased by approximately 240,000 in the year to May 2002. Of this increase, 66% were female and 34% were male.

212. 49% of women of working age have dependent children under the age of 19 and their overall activity rate is 69% compared with 76% for women without children under the age of 19[17]. Between Spring 1992 and Spring 2002, an increase in the proportion of those in part-time employment took place. The number of working age people in part-time employment rose by about 1.2 million, with women contributing around 50% of this increase. 5.2 million women of working age (43% of those in employment) worked part-time March to May 2002. Women in employment therefore tend to work fewer hours than men, on average 31 hours per week compared with 43 hours for men, but even women in full time employment work 3.5 hours less per week than men.

Family-friendly employment policies

213. In recognition of the importance of and growth in women's participation in the labour market, the Government is committed to helping mothers and fathers balance work and family life. A range of family friendly rights has been introduced following a review of maternity and parental rights in the green paper *Work and Parents: Competitiveness and Choice*, published in December 2000. These rights will give more choice to women and enable business to benefit from a greater contribution from the workforce by keeping women's skills and knowledge in the economy. The Government has introduced a cohesive package of parental rights to enable women to balance work and family commitments. Employees will be protected from dismissal or other detrimental action if they exercise any of their rights in the package. The main elements are:

- *Parental leave* — Parents of children born or adopted on or after 15 December 1999 (the date the right was first introduced) are covered by the *Maternity and Parental Leave etc. Regulations 1999*, and may qualify for parental leave if they have one year's continuous service with their employer. They are entitled to a total of 13 weeks unpaid leave, which can be taken up to the child's fifth birthday or the fifth anniversary of placement for adoption (or the child's 18th birthday if that is sooner).
- Parents of children born or adopted between 15 December 1994 and 14 December 1999 are covered by the new *Maternity and Parental Leave (Amendment) Regulations 2001*, and qualify for parental leave if they have completed one year's continuous service with an employer (other than their current employer) during the period 15 December 1998 to 9 January 2002. They are entitled to a total 13 weeks unpaid leave, to be taken up to 31 March 2005 (or in the case of adoption, the child's 18th birthday if that is sooner).

[16] Labour Force Survey figure seasonally adjusted and regressed to the 2001 census.

[17] These figures are derived from the Labour Force Survey. Women with dependent children are either the head of the family unit or the wife or partner of the head of family unit. Women without dependent children may include some who are not parents but who do have some caring responsibilities for children in the family unit.

- The take-up of parental leave is estimated to be between 3-12%[18]. Taking into account parents who have now gained entitlements as a result of the 10 January 2002 amendment, the total number of parents expected to take parental leave each year is estimated at being between 220,000 and 530,000. This figure represents the estimated total number of parental leave rights expected to be exercised per year, rather than the total number of parents who actually receive the right.
- *Right to request flexible working:* Since April 2003 parents of children aged under 6 or parents of disabled children aged under 18 have the right to apply to work flexibly. Employers will have a duty to consider such requests seriously.

214. All parents of disabled children born or adopted on or after 15 December 1994, and who have the necessary qualifying length of service, are entitled to a total of 18 week's unpaid leave which can be taken up to the child's 18th birthday. There are around 380,000 children under the age of 18 in Great Britain who have a disability Disabled children generally have to attend more medical appointments than other children and this can be difficult for parents trying to balance caring for their child's needs with the pressures of work. The costs of increasing parental leave entitlement for these parents is likely to be around £1m – 2m in total per year.

- *Maternity leave*: From April 2003 maternity leave for all employed mothers increased from 18 weeks to 26 weeks regardless of their length of service. Additional maternity leave increased to 26 weeks giving most mothers up to one year off work in total. Statutory maternity pay and Maternity Allowance, available for qualifying mothers, is paid for 26 weeks at higher rates. The contract of employment will continue throughout maternity (and parental) leave. Approximately 350,000 mothers each year will benefit from the increase in maternity leave and pay.
- *Adoption leave:* Since April 2003 adopters with a child newly placed for adoption have the right to 26 weeks paid adoption leave followed by up to 26 weeks unpaid adoption leave. This right is subject to a 26 week qualifying employment period and minimum earnings criteria.
- *Paternity leave:* Since April 2003 qualifying employees will benefit from two weeks paid paternity leave in the time around which their partner gives birth to a child.
- *Time off for dependants:* All employees are entitled to take a reasonable amount of unpaid time off to deal with an emergency or unexpected situation involving a dependant. This right is available regardless of length of service.
- The Government will also be taking forward an awareness and promotional campaign to encourage employers to introduce family-friendly policies that build on these requirements.

215. Implementation of the *Working Time Directive* (see previous report) provides rights to minimum daily and weekly rest periods; rest breaks; annual paid holidays; a limit of 48 hours a week on the average time which employees can be required to work (except by voluntary agreement); and restrictions on hours worked at night. Implementing regulations came into force in October 1998. The *Part-time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000* ensure that Britain's six million part-timers, 80% of whom are women, can no longer be treated less favourably in their employment terms than comparable full-time colleagues, just because they work part-time. See article 2 for further information.

216. Corresponding legislative provisions will apply in Northern Ireland.

[18] This figure is taken from the survey evidence as collected by DTI in Autumn 2000, which found that 12 per cent of employed parents who said that their employer provided parental leave also said that they had taken parental leave since December 1999 when the right was first introduced. This equates to about 3 per cent of all employed parents. The range of 3 — 12 per cent allows for uncertainties about provisions for parental leave in the workplace, and also to the fact that take-up is likely to increase over time as awareness of entitlements increases.

Maternity rights

217. Maternity rights in the UK were extended in 1994, as described in the previous periodic reports and again in April 2003 as detailed in article 2 of this report. The proportion of women returning to work within eleven months of having a baby has increased from 45% in 1988 to 67% in 1996. A 2000 Department of Trade and Industry survey of how parents balance their work, life and home found that 88% of all working mothers who had taken maternity leave and had a child under the age of 5 returned to their original employer.

Childcare

218. The implementation of the *National Childcare Strategy* is a major component in the Government's wider support and encouragement of family friendly working arrangements. There are particular benefits for women, especially lone parents, as an increase in quality childcare provision helps them maintain continuity of employment and find work, training and employment. The Government's National Childcare Strategy was launched in 1998 to ensure accessible, affordable and quality childcare in every area. It aims to create places to help 1.6 million children by 2004. As a result, at December 2002, more than 647,000 new childcare places have been created since 1997, benefiting over 1,100,000 children. Taking account of turnover, this added more than 367,000 places, for over 688,000 children, to the stock of places available. Particular efforts are being made to extend childcare in disadvantaged areas where provision can still be scare. At February 2003, 160 new Neighbourhood Nurseries had opened in these areas. There are a further 1,200 Nursery projects in development, helping to account for a total of over 50,000 new childcare places. At November 2002, 180,000 middle and lower income working families were receiving substantial help with their childcare costs through the childcare tax credit component of Working Families Tax Credit. (From April 2003, this assistance has been made available in a more flexible form through the childcare element of Working Tax Credit (see article 13 for details). Increases to the Sure Start Maternity grant from £300 to £500 in June 2002 will benefit 215,000 low-income families a year, to help with the costs of having a new baby.

219. The National Childcare Strategy is complemented by the Government's introduction of free part time early education for 4 and 3 year olds. Currently all 4 year olds, and 70% of 3 year olds, are able to enjoy free early education places. Every 3 year old will be able to access a free place by April 2004, in advance of the September 2004 target date. All 4 year olds have been guaranteed a free early education place since 1998.

Pay

220. The Government is fully committed to taking practical measures to help to close the gender pay gap. Since 1975, when the *Equal Pay Act* came into effect the full-time pay gap has closed considerably, from 30% to around 19% in 2002. The Government is determined to take steps to help close the pay gap further and has conducted research to understand the root-causes of the pay gap in order to reduce it. Contributing factors to the pay gap, include: a greater proportion of women than men work part-time (44% compared with 10%) and a higher proportion of part-time jobs are in lower paying occupations; and the effect of women's childbirth and caring responsibilities. Women re-entering the workforce (as opposed to taking maternity leave or career breaks) do so at lower wage rates than men who have had long absences from the labour market.

221. The Government is working to reduce the gender pay gap through a variety of measures, including the equal pay questionnaire, working with the EOC to promote equal pay reviews, providing trade unions with additional funding for training representatives in equal pay issues and by requiring the Civil Service to undertake pay reviews by end of April 2003.

222. The Civil Service is committed to undertake equal pay reviews and prepare Action Plans. Action Plans representing 81% of the Civil Service have now been received by the Cabinet Office. The Cabinet Office is undertaking the equal pay review for the Senior Civil Service, representing the top 3500 Civil Servants.

223. The EOC and Fair Pay Champions are currently taking forward work to promote and share good practice in the food and soft drink manufacturing and retail finance sectors. Future work is planned in other sectors, including Further Education. The Government provided the EOC with £100,000 to prepare a model for voluntary pay reviews, which was launched in July 2002. A separate system for small businesses has been developed. Also provided additional funding of £151,867 (on top of the initial £145,000) to trade unions, for training representatives in equal pay issues in the workplace.

224. The Employment Act 2002 (see article 2) makes it easier for women who have been discriminated against to take up equal pay cases by simplifying the existing procedure, and introducing a questionnaire procedure that will help resolve matters in the workplace. The Employment Act includes a number of measures to help tackle the other main causes of the pay gap; women's lower level of work experience, and the part-time pay gap.

225. The Castle Awards, launched in March 2002, are designed to recognise steps taken by employers of all sizes and in all sectors to promote equality of opportunity between men and women and to address the issues of pay inequality.
The Equal Pay Forum, organised by Opportunity Now and the EOC is promoting equal pay reviews among employers. Approximately 190 firms have joined the Forum. Members must have committed to carrying out or already undertaken an equal pay review.

226. Other Government initiatives to reduce the pay gap include the National Minimum Wage (see article 2 for details) as well as measures to tackle job segregation (see articles 5 and 10 for details). For example, the National Curriculum ensures that both girls and boys study the full range of subjects and therefore have a broad base on which to make career-related choices. Women comprised 55% of undergraduates in academic year 2001 (see article 10) and, in time, the impact of greater numbers of more highly qualified women, with greater earnings potential, should be reflected in higher actual earnings. The Careers Service is required to operate an equal opportunities policy that questions stereotypical career choices. The *Part-time Workers' Regulations* (see article 2) will contribute to a narrowing of the pay gap, as it requires employers to accord part-time workers conditions and contracts in-line with their full-time counterparts. This should, in turn, have a positive impact on the pay gap as the majority of part-time workers are women. The *Parental Leave Regulations* and reform of maternity rights will also enable employees to reconcile their work and family lives (see above).

New Deal for Lone Parents

227. As part of the measures to tackle poverty among women, the Government has intensified its efforts aimed at improving lone parents' living standards by facilitating their access to the labour market. In this context, the Government introduced the New Deal for Lone Parents (NDLP), in 1997, that aims to help and encourage lone parents to improve their prospects and living standards by taking up and increasing paid work. In November 2001, NDLP was extended to include all lone parents not working, or working fewer than 16 hours per week. Over 90% of those benefiting from the programme are women. NDLP offers active case management through dedicated Personal Advisers (PAs). The PA will offer advice on job-search, childcare, training and in-work benefits, and provide an in-work support service to help lone parents make the transition into employment.

228. The Government is committed to ensuring rigorous analysis and evaluation of recently introduced policies. In this context, evaluation of the New Deal for Lone Parents is being conducted by independent researchers, as well as being monitored by the Department for Work and Pensions. A full programme of research is underway, with many findings already available. A quantified measure of the impact of the national NDLP programme is to be published in 2003. However, approximately half of those participating in national NDLP go on to get jobs. Evaluation of the national programme has shown a number of benefits of NDLP, beyond simple job outcomes. Participants reported high levels of satisfaction with NDLP, with most of the praise directed towards their PA. NDLP helped lone parents find work, change their working arrangements, find a place in an education or training programme, or set up a business. These tangible outcomes were often combined with less tangible improvements such as improved confidence in relation to ability and skills, and increased motivation.

229. As at January 2002, NDLP has supported over 318,000 lone parents and 132,730 jobs have been gained through NDLP. Although by far the largest proportion of NDLP participants have joined of their own accord, increasing numbers are choosing to participate following a mandatory work-focused interview with a lone parent personal adviser. PA meetings are intended to increase participation in NDLP by making lone parents aware of the help and support available to them. PA meetings are mandatory for certain groups of lone parents who claim Income Support. Lone Parent PA meetings were introduced in April 2001 to new and repeat claimants with a youngest child over 5 years and 3 months of age, and existing IS claimants with children aged between 13 to 15 years. From April 2002, PA meetings were extended to new and repeat claimants with a youngest child aged 3 to 5 years and regular claimants with children aged 9-12 years. PA meetings will be rolled out to new and repeat claimants with a youngest child aged 0-3 years and stock claimants with a child aged 5-8 yrs from April 2003, and to stock claimants with a child 0-5 yrs in April 2004. There is also a rolling programme of the introduction of six and twelve-monthly review meetings. Evidence shows that the introduction of PA meetings is having a positive effect on NDLP participation: the proportion of those having a PA meeting who subsequently join NDLP is approximately 32%, compared to a take-up rate of approximately 6% before they were introduced.

Women in Business

230. Women entrepreneurs make an increasingly important contribution to the business sector. The 2002 Labour Force Survey estimates that women constitute around 27% of the self-employed in the UK. Women are most likely to establish businesses in service sectors, with nearly 50% of businesses in this sector started by women. A key Government objective is to promote enterprise for all. As part of this agenda it is important to ensure that services for start-up businesses are delivered effectively in disadvantaged areas and to those in under-represented groups, including women and ethnic minorities. As part of this, the Government's Small Business Service is taking the lead in identifying and removing barriers in the provision of those services and spreading best practice.

231. The *Small Business Service and Government – the Way Forward* (published in December 2002) set out a new policy framework for a Government-wide approach to helping small firms. It identifies seven core strategies as key drivers for economic growth, improved productivity and a wider involvement in enterprise for all. One of the seven core strategies is "encouraging more enterprise in disadvantaged communities and under-represented groups".

232. The Small Business Service, in partnership with Prowess (a UK-wide trade association for the promotion of women's enterprise support), has led the development of a cross Government strategy for women's enterprise which will focus primarily on the business support needs of women starting and growing their own businesses. The strategy, launched on 8 May 2003, has also had an input from the Devolved Administrations. The framework aims to incorporate good practice examples, guidelines and measurable outcomes aimed at various business support providers.

233. Policy support for women can be successful in increasing both the number of start-ups and the long-term growth potential of women-owned businesses. For example, the Government runs national schemes such as the Small Firms Loan Guarantee Scheme that has been of particular help to women who may lack a proven track record in raising finance. Moreover, the Small Business Services Phoenix Fund (launched in November 1999) encourages entrepreneurship in disadvantaged areas and within groups that are currently under-represented in terms of business ownership, including women. The Fund's £96 million budget to March 2004, in July 2002 was allocated an additional £50 million for 2004-05 to 2005-06. The bulk of these additional resources will be used to continue support for the community development finance sector and for business support activities currently funded through the Development Fund element of the Fund. The Development Fund is running over 90 projects encouraging innovative approaches to supporting entrepreneurship in disadvantaged areas and under-represented groups. All of the projects are opened to women and 15 of them focus specifically on women.

234. Women are playing a key role in providing much needed services and employment through social enterprises. A social enterprise is a business with primarily social objectives whose surpluses are principally reinvested for that purpose in the business or in the community, rather than being driven by the need to maximise profit for shareholder and owners. One sector of social enterprises which is often highlighted as an example of how women are making a positive contribution is that of childcare. This activity provides both a service to and employment for other women and enables parents to return to the workplace. Other areas of activity in social enterprises where women play a key role are those of care work, training & education, tourism and recycling. The Social Enterprise Unit was set up in DTI to provide a focal point for strategic decision-making on social enterprise across Government.

Older women in employment

235. We are delivering a range of measures to tackle age discrimination in employment and help women and men over 50 back into work and remain in work for longer. In this context, the Government has committed to implementing the age strand of the *European Employment Directive* by 2006, when domestic legislation will come into force outlawing age discrimination in employment and training. In the meantime, through the *Age Positive* campaign, the Government is vigorously promoting to employers the business benefits of age diversity, so that legislation when it is introduced will simply confirm existing good practice. The campaign is challenging employers' prejudices and perceptions and aims to achieve a culture change and help employers prepare for the coming legislation. At the heart of the Age Positive campaign is the *Code of Practice on Age Diversity in Employment*. The code is aimed at employers and sets the standard for non-ageist approaches to recruitment, selection, training, promotion and retirement. Moreover, a major programme for people over 50 looking for work, *New Deal 50 plus*, was rolled out nationally in April 2000. It is a voluntary programme designed to help long-term unemployed and economically inactive women and men over 50, who have been claiming work related benefits for 6 months or more, back into paid employment. Some 81,000 women and men have been helped into work through *New Deal 50 plus*. Following the success of *New Deal 50 plus*, complemented by other programmes, the employment rate of the over 50s has increased every year for the last five years. For men the rate has increased by 3.2 percentage points in the five years to spring 2002, from 38.3% to 41.4%. For women during the same period the rate has increased by 4.3 percentage points, from 30.4% to 34.2%.

Women with disabilities

236. In December 2001, over 6.9 million people of working age were long-term disabled people in Great Britain of whom 3.3 million were disabled women. In 2001, 19% of employed people were long-term disabled[19] people of whom 47% were female (lower numbers reflect the fact that women aged 60-64 are not included in the working-age population). The Government is offering employment and training programmes to women and men with disabilities. Through its network of Disability Service Teams, Job-Centre Plus is committed to opening up career opportunities to more disabled women and men and helping employers recruit, retain and develop disabled employees. People facing complex employment-related barriers associated with a disability are supported by Jobcentre Plus Disability Employment Advisers (DEAs) who provide a wide range of employment services to women and men with disabilities. DEAs also play a key role in providing specialist advice and help to employers to encourage them to adopt good employment policies and practices in the recruitment, retention, training and career development of women with disabilities, including advice on practical and financial help available including adaptations to premises or the provision of special aids to employment under the Access to Work programme. For more information on Government action in this area see annex 1 (article 11, p. 9).

[19] Those with a disability which has a substantial adverse impact on their day-to-day activities or limits kind or amount of work and those known to have a progressive condition.

Unpaid Work

237. The UK Office for National Statistics produced an experimental Household Satellite Account (HHSA) for the year 2000. This measured and valued the outputs of household production under seven headings – housing, transport, nutrition, clothing and laundry services, childcare, adult care and voluntary activity. These were then linked to the relevant inputs of purchased goods and services, household capital (dwellings, vehicles and household appliances), and labour as measured by the UK 2000 Time Use Survey. This enabled the calculation of the value added by household members in the production process – the effective return on their labour. Household production was worth approximately 78% of adjusted GDP in 2000. Time spent in household production was calculated by adding together the total hours spent on activities associated with the above headings, recorded both as primary and as secondary activity.

238. The survey results, including children over the age of 8 years, were grossed to the UK population using estimates based on the Labour Force Survey. The estimates for childcare and adult care included an imputation for unrecorded passive care. Estimates of time spent in household production can be broken down by gender, as shown in the table 11.2 in annex 2 (p. 12), but the value of the output cannot be disaggregated without further research into the relationship between inputs and outputs. Females spent 27% of their total hours – including primary and secondary activities and passive care — on household production and 7% in paid work, while males spent 20% of their total hours on household production and 12% in paid work. If we look only at primary activities, both males and females spent approximately 27% of their time in household production and paid employment, with males spending 13% of their time on household production, compared with 19% of females' time. These gender differences are not as stark as those suggested by other research, because of the activities included in these calculations. See tables 11.1-11.2 in annex 2 (article 11, p. 12).

Eliminating discrimination — health and safety at work

239. For information on eliminating discrimination in the right to protection of health and to safety in working conditions see annex 1 (article 11, p. 9-10).

Women migrant workers

240. See Article 9.

Northern Ireland

Childcare

241. In September 1999, the pre-devolution Department of Health and Social Services, Department of Education and Training and Employment Agency published *Children First*, the Northern Ireland Childcare Strategy. This extended the *National Childcare Strategy* to Northern Ireland, adapting it as appropriate but keeping the three key aims of raising the quality of childcare, making childcare more affordable and improving access to childcare. In addition to the measures set out in the strategy, the Department for Employment and Learning pays childcare allowances to lone parents participating in a range of vocational training programmes, and in 2001 introduced childcare grants as part of a new regime of financial support for students. In 2001, the Department for Employment and Learning, the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and the four Childcare Partnerships in Northern Ireland jointly commissioned research on childcare and women's access to employment, training and education. The research will be used to forecast the demand for and the supply of different types of daycare in Northern Ireland over the next five to eight years. Employers for Childcare is both a campaign and a service for employers, to enable them to help their female and male employees and potential employees to find childcare solutions. In order to help raise the quality of childcare, the Department for Employment and Learning has introduced more favourable conditions in some vocational training programmes for women and men who are training in childcare (e.g. for National Vocational Qualifications in Early Years Care and Education and in Playwork).

Women in business

242. Recognising that women in business are under-represented, the Government is undertaking a numb initiatives to increase their representation in the business sector. In 2001, a report, *Mapping of Su Provision for Women in Enterprises in Northern Ireland – A Strategic Framework for the Future*, aim understanding the barriers that potential women entrepreneurs experience, was carried out. The report pro information on the outcomes of a consultation process (June-September 2001) with women entrepreneu different stages of business development as well as support providers and other stakeholders. Invest Nor Ireland (INI) is a Non-Departmental Public Body of the Department of Enterprise Trade and Investment came into existence in April 2002. INI has produced a strategic framework to encourage women in busine grow and expand their existing operations as well as facilitate women's entry into business. The frame developed is all-inclusive with a focus on effective and consistent communication of information to all wo in Northern Ireland interested in setting up their own businesses. The Spring 2002 labour Force Su estimates that 17% of the self-employed are women.

Public Sector Training Programmes

243. March 2001 figures show that 45% of participants on Training and Employment Agency (now part o Department for Employment and Learning) programmes and services were female. The Departme committed to promoting equality of opportunity in all of its programmes and services and has in place mea such as: monitoring the use of its services and participation in its programmes as appropriate with the ai identify any participation rates or take-up rates that are lower than expected, and their causes; and develop of programmes for women managers with the aim of increasing the numbers of women managers in posi of leadership in Northern Ireland.

The EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation

244. Under the PEACE 11 Programme (2000-2004) women as a group are encouraged to seek funding range of activities. In particular resources are available to improve women's access to and participation i labour market and to improve entrepreneurship among women.

Scotland

Childcare

245. The Scottish Executive's Childcare Strategy aims to provide affordable, accessible, good quality chil for children aged 0-14 in every neighbourhood, to help meet the needs of working parents. The Sco Executive is providing £16.75 million of Childcare Strategy funding in 2002-03 and £ 19.25 million in 200 to local authorities who are responsible, with Childcare Partnerships, for making decisions on its disburse to meet local needs. Out of School Care (OSC) has an important role to play in labour market growth family prosperity by helping enable people back into work. A cross-sectoral working group will be set-u make recommendations on issues affecting the delivery of OSC services.

246. A network of Childcare Partnerships has been created, one in each local authority area, with mem from the public, private and voluntary sectors. Their task is to identify local needs for childcare, plan expan of services to meet the needs identified and commit themselves and their resources to achieving this. Child Partnerships are responsible for giving informed direction to local authorities on the allocation of Child Strategy funding. ChildcareLink is funded as part of the Scottish Childcare Strategy, and provides inform on all aspects of early education and childcare. ChildcareLink operates a national telephone information and a website. The New Opportunities Fund (NOF) first round programme 1999-2003 made £25.3 mi available for out-of-school childcare projects in Scotland. A further £14.5 million will be available from 2 06 in the third round quality childcare programme, that will also support new and existing childcare proj especially in disadvantaged areas and also those projects meeting the needs of parents who are in w

studying or training. The Executive is looking at the existing sitter service network, which provides childcare in the parent's home to support unusual working patterns for low income families, as a possible means of extending eligibility to the Childcare Tax Credit in Scotland. From April 2003 sitter services were regulated by the Scottish Commission for the Regulation of Care as childcare agencies.

247. Under the *Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001*, the Scottish Executive established the Scottish Commission for the Regulation of Care (Care Commission) in April 2002, and new national care standards for early education and childcare and for childcare agencies have been published. The Care Commission is responsible for registering and inspecting childcare provision in the public, private and voluntary sectors against these care standards. The Act provides for the regulation of the social services workforce, by establishing the Scottish Social Services Council that became operational from October 2001. The Council will regulate the education and training of social services workers and raise standards through the publication of codes of conduct and practice. Registration of the early education and childcare workforce will not commence before 2005. From April 2003, inspection of centres providing pre-school education that HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) conducted, have been replaced with inspections undertaken by the Care Commission working jointly with HMIE. These inspections apply to all kinds of centres offering pre-school education, including nursery schools and classes.

248. *Child Poverty Package for Lone Parents* — The Scottish Executive attaches great importance to assisting lone parents in education and employment. See article 10 for information.

Women in business

249. Scottish Enterprise has in place a broad range of initiatives to provide advice, assistance and training for women starting a business or considering doing so. Examples include: the Women into the Network (WIN) programme; various Training and Development programmes; Women's Business Clubs; Women into Business Programme; coaching seminars *scottishbusinesswoman.com*; Women's Business Directory; Women's Technology Centre. In December 2001, Scottish Enterprise commissioned an independent review of its Business Birth Rate Strategy. The enquiry, which reported in June 2001, confirmed the importance of supporting more women into business. It strongly recommended the development of positive and proactive initiatives to encourage women. The issue is now established as a clear priority for the Scottish Enterprise Network and is being addressed through its New Approach to Entrepreneurship initiative, which was launched on 23 January 2002. The aim is that in 3 years 40% of new business start-ups assisted by the Scottish Enterprise Network are to be women led. This will account for 3,600 new business starts in 2004-05.

250. A number of additional initiatives are already underway to encourage women into enterprise: in February 2002 a Microcredit Programme, aimed primarily at women, was launched across the Scottish Enterprise Network; a second Women into Business conference was held in Glasgow in May 2002, attracting over 1,000 women; the Scottish Enterprise Premier Adviser Programme is being developed to increase awareness of the women into business programme and ensure that business advisers throughout the Network understand the issues and hurdles faced by women;, A new access to funding programme was introduced by Scottish Enterprise in September 2002. *Business Investment for Growth* (BIG) offers specialist help to women seeking to raise finance to grow their business; Scottish Enterprise have also launched in September a case study brochure promoting successful female entrepreneurs, funded jointly by the Executive; and a new format to the Small Business Gateway has been introduced, integrating existing web services for women entrepreneurs and for Business Mentoring Scotland programme. Scotland's other development agency, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, also attaches a high priority to helping women into business.

Pay

251. The Scottish Executive launched the *Close the Gap* campaign in March 2001 to raise awareness about the pay gap between women and men and encourage activity to close the gap. The EQUAL Community Initiative, part-financed by the European Social Fund, is a programme to develop innovative means of combating all

forms of discrimination and inequality in the labour market. One of the themes of the programme is targeted at reducing gender gaps and supporting job desegregation. The programme involves two stages: one to develop the partnership and second to deliver the actual programme. The Scottish Executive is a partner in a development partnership under this theme, with the Equal Opportunities Commission designated as the lead partner.

Wales

Childcare

252. Out of school childcare funding has increased since 1999 with the New Opportunities Fund (NOF) committing £14.3 million with the aim of creating 22,000 new childcare places. The NOF has enabled a total of 332 new clubs that have created 23,236 childcare places in Wales. Furthermore, £2 million has been made available for supporting the sustainability and workforce development of out of school childcare provision. Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Club (CPCKC) was awarded an Assembly Government contract in July 2001 to become the Out of School Childcare Club Organisation for Wales. The aim of CPCKC is the promotion, development and expansion of high quality, affordable, accessible clubs throughout Wales, as well as offering ongoing support. As of October 2002, there are 866 out of school clubs in Wales. The Assembly Government funds development workers in CPCKC, who work closely with NOF to assist these clubs to obtain funding.

253. The Welsh Assembly Government announced a new *Childcare Action Plan* in May 2002, based on the recommendations of the Childcare Task Force. The Task Force (comprised members from a range of statutory organisations) was charged with reviewing progress and developing the Assembly's strategy for childcare. The Plan is part of the Assembly's programme aimed at the welfare of children, the care sector and economic regeneration. The key aims of the Plan include integrating childcare with Sure Start and other services through a unified fund and development of integrated centres; removing barriers to parents who wish to enter the labour market or education; and maximising all sources of funding for childcare.

Women in business

254. The *Entrepreneurship Action Plan for Wales* (EAP) has identified specific groups, amongst them women, that are under-represented in terms of starting up in business and that require special measures of support and encouragement in enterprise development. An integral project of the Plan is *Women's Enterprise Wales* (WEW) set up to address the needs of potential female entrepreneurs pan-Wales. It is managed through Chwarae Teg and is a pre-business start-up programme for women interested in setting up in business but who face various barriers which makes it difficult to work immediately with the existing mainstream service provision. It aims to increase the number of women moving into self-employment by delivering a range of outreach support services in order to enable them to actively engage with mainstream. In its first year, Women's Enterprise Wales has provided assistance to over 600 women and created approximately 100 new businesses across Wales.

ARTICLE 12: WOMEN'S HEALTH

255. The Government has made tackling health inequalities a priority and recognises that gender is an important aspect of health inequalities. A Health Inequalities Unit (HIU) has been established in the Department of Health responsible for driving delivery of the government's Health Inequalities Strategy working across government departments and agencies at local, regional and national levels. As promised in the *National Health Service (NHS) Plan*, published in 2000 a national health inequalities Public Service Agreement target has been set to reduce inequalities in health outcomes by 10% as measured by infant mortality and life expectancy at birth by 2010. Other Department of Health related inequalities targets include the reduction of conception rates of girls under 18 by 15% by 2004 and 50% by 2010, and the reduction of smoking rates among manual groups from 32% in 1998 to 26% by 2010 to narrow the health gap.

256. Building on earlier work both to understand the health inequalities problem and to consult across sectors on actions to tackle health inequalities, the government undertook a cross cutting Review on health inequalities. The Review recognises that a range of factors can have an impact on the take up of services and facilities including, for example, gender and ethnic group. *Tackling Health Inequalities: Summary of the 2002 Cross-Cutting Review* was published in November 2002 and is available at http://www.doh.gov.uk/healthinequalities. The HIU is leading work to develop an *All-Government Delivery Plan* focusing on the action needed to deliver the strategy. It will set out what must be achieved on tackling inequalities and by whom, the time-scales involved, and how progress will be monitored. The Plan is due to be published during 2003 and will be available on the health inequalities website.

257. In order to address difficulties in accessing health services by ethnic minority women, the Government is working to facilitate their access to health services and quality care by taking into account their needs, priorities and experiences through a number of approaches including the *National Service Frameworks*, the *NHS Plan* and the *Inequalities in Health Programmes*. These include innovative programmes that involve places of worship, such as Gurudwara, Mosques and Temples, to promote health and rehabilitation services. The Department has been funding black and minority ethnic organisations for a number of years to build their capacity to undertake health work. These organisations play a major role in tackling inequalities in health at the local level by designing health promotion programmes to reach black and minority ethnic groups. The Department of Health has also funded the production of videos with supporting materials on breast screening and cervical cytology in Asian languages and English for the African Caribbean and Asian women. The resources take into account the lifestyle of the targeted groups.

Family Planning Services

258. Family planning services are available from specialist clinics and family doctors (GPs). Family planning advice and contraceptives are free to all under the National Health Service. In 2001, approximately 75% of women in Great Britain aged between 16 and 49 used some form of contraception — a figure that has remained fairly constant over the last 15 years. In England, improving access to contraception, sexual health advice, pregnancy testing and NHS abortions are key strands of the *Teenage Pregnancy Strategy* and the *Strategy for Sexual Health and HIV* (see below for details on these strategies).

Teenage pregnancy

259. Concerned at the level of teenage conception (see table 12.1 in annex 2, article 12, p.13), and recognising the consequences of early motherhood (including, lower educational achievement and higher levels of poverty), the Government has intensified its efforts to address this issue and there are encouraging signs as the teenage conception rate is falling (see below). The Government conducted a study on the complex reasons for, and set out a clear strategy to address teenage pregnancy. In June 1999, the Government launched a ten-year *National Teenage Pregnancy Strategy* for England that aims to: halve the rate of conceptions among girls under 18 years of age by 2010, with a reduction of 15% by 2004; set a firmly established downward trend in the conception rates for girls under 16 years of age; and increase the participation of teenage parents in education and employment to 60% by 2010. Some of the other UK administrations are developing their own strategy. The *National Teenage Pregnancy Strategy* is tackling the causes and consequences of teenage pregnancy through an integrated and multi-faceted approach that includes: joining up action at national, regional and local level; a national campaign to help young people resist peer pressure, make their own choices and take responsibility; better prevention by improving Sex and Relationships Education and the provision of contraceptive advice services for young people; as well as better support for pregnant teenagers and teenage parents to increase their participation in education, training and employment and reduce their risk of social exclusion.

260. A cross-Government implementation unit, the Teenage Pregnancy Unit, was established in 1999 to drive delivery of the Strategy. Every local authority area has an agreed local teenage pregnancy strategy and rolling three-year action plan that sets out how the local authority and health bodies will work together to implement the national Strategy. Implementation of local strategies is managed by a network of local co-ordinators

supported by regional co-ordinators. In addition to establishing the infrastructure for delivery, key achievements since the Strategy was launched include:

- A national advertising campaign aimed at young people began in October 2000, focusing on the themes of choices and taking control and responsibility around relationships and sexual behaviour, including resisting peer pressure. Evaluation has shown that 77% of 13-17 year olds recognise the campaign materials.
- New guidance for schools on Sex and Relationships Education is being implemented.
- Best practice guidance on the provision of effective contraception and advice services for young people has been issued, against which local services have been audited.
- A Young People's Forum has been established as a tool for consulting young people about the Strategy.
- Providing personal support for pregnant teenagers and teenage parents on health, education, benefits and housing issues. For example, nine pilot areas are testing how best to provide childcare for teenage parents, to help them return to education, training or employment. Six housing pilots are testing how best to support teenage parents. The Housing Corporation has approved funding for over 1,500 new units of supported housing for teenage parents.

261. A four-year evaluation programme is underway to provide valuable information not only about what is having an effect but also how it works. An Independent Advisory Group on Teenage Pregnancy was established in 2000 to advise the Government and monitor the overall success of the strategy. In June 2002, the Government Response to the First Annual Report of the Independent Advisory Group on Teenage Pregnancy was launched, building on the recommendations made by the Advisory Group to set out a new forward action plan for the next phase of implementation. All 30 of the action points set out in the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy are being implemented. There are very encouraging signs that the Strategy is making an impact. As mentioned above, data for 2001 published in February 2003 shows that under 16 and under 18 conception rates are down by 10% since 1998 (i.e. from 47 per thousand women aged 15-17 in 1998 to 42.3 per thousand women aged 15-17 in 2001; and 8.8 per thousand women aged 13-15 in 1998 to 7.9 per thousand women aged 13-15 in 2001). The strategy relates to both boys and girls — the first time a national strategy has done this both in relation to prevention through sex and relationships education and contraceptive advice, and in relation to supporting young fathers.

Maternity Services

262. The Department remains committed to the principle of putting women at the centre of maternity services planning. Progress has been made in developing readily available information sources, aimed at ensuring women are getting full information and choices throughout pregnancy and childbirth. For example, the *Pregnancy Book*, given free to all first time mothers, contains comprehensive information and guidance for a healthy pregnancy, labour and giving birth as well as life with the new baby. Moreover, the primarily midwife-led, community-based maternity service offering women greater choice, control and continuity of care, is now largely mainstream NHS practice. Women on the whole are happy with the maternity service they receive and the latest figures for infant mortality rates, peri-natal mortality rates and maternal deaths all show a continuing downward trend. It is therefore safer than ever before to have a baby. An important improvement in maternity services, currently under development, is the Children's National Service Framework (NSF), announced in 2001. The NSF will set national standards of care for antenatal, intrapartum (childbirth) and postnatal services. In addition the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) have issued guidelines on important clinical procedures such as induction of labour, electronic foetal monitoring. Further guidelines are being developed on caesarean section and routine antenatal care. Moreover, in 2001, the report of the Sentinel Audit of Caesarean Section, commissioned by the Department of Health, was published. The findings from the Audit will help inform development of the NICE guidelines as well as the maternity element of the National Service Framework.

Abortion in the United Kingdom

263. Abortion in England, Wales and Scotland is regulated by the *Abortion Act 1967*, as amended, as described in the previous report. After remaining steady since 1988, the abortion rate rose in the period 1996-1998 and has stabilised again during the reporting period, with about 175,000 abortions to residents of England and Wales in each year.[20]. A *National Sexual Health and HIV Strategy* (see below for details) was issued in 2001, followed by an *Implementation Action Plan* in 2002, setting out actions to tackle inequalities in access to abortion in England. Also see teenage pregnancy above.

Abortion in Northern Ireland

264. The *Abortion Act* does not extend to Northern Ireland. The law for Northern Ireland is found in the *Offences Against the Persons Act 1861*, the *Criminal Justice (Northern Ireland Act) 1945*, and certain case law. Whilst the issue has not been devolved to the Northern Ireland Assembly, the mechanism to do so is contained in the *Northern Ireland Act 1998*. Government Ministers are aware of the great strength of feeling on this issue, and the divergence of opinion that exists and the calls, by some persons, for a review of the legislation. The Government will not impose any change in Northern Ireland on what is recognised as a most sensitive issue. Any change to the law on abortion could only come about with broad support from a cross-section of the people of Northern Ireland. On 20 June 2000 the Assembly debated the issue and clearly voted against extension of the 1967 Abortion Act to Northern Ireland. The Family Planning Association (FPA) has applied for judicial review, the outcome of which will be known shortly. In 2001, 1,577 women travelled from Northern Ireland to England and Wales for an abortion.

Sexual Health and HIV/AIDS

265. Between January and December 2001, there had been 4909 new HIV diagnoses made and 674 AIDS diagnoses. New HIV diagnoses in 2002 are expected to be in the region of 6,500. During the reporting period, there has been an increase in the number of women diagnosed with HIV in the UK as a result of increased testing of pregnant women (see below) and differences in health seeking behaviour. However, the number of women diagnosed with HIV in the UK remains relatively small (around one fifth of the cumulative total of HIV diagnoses were for women). In 2001, 38% of reported HIV infections and 33% of AIDS cases were in women (see tables 12.7 and 12.8 in annex 2, p. 14-15). Promoting safer sex is still key to prevention efforts and HIV testing is being encouraged to allow prompt access to treatment. The use of highly active antiretroviral therapy has reduced the progression to AIDS and death in HIV infected people since the mid-1990s.

Antenatal HIV testing

266. Over 250 women had their infection diagnosed in 2001 as a result of antenatal testing. In the UK, almost all HIV infected children have contracted the infection from their mothers during pregnancy, childbirth or via breastfeeding. The Government is working to reduce the number of HIV infected children through delivery of effective interventions (drug treatment, elective Caesarean delivery and avoidance of breastfeeding) aimed at reducing the risk of transmission. National targets and objectives were set in 1999 involving the offer and recommendation of an HIV test to all pregnant women throughout England. It is intended that by increasing the uptake of antenatal HIV testing to 90%, and by increasing the proportion of HIV infections diagnosed prior to delivery to 80%, an 80% reduction in the proportion of children acquiring HIV infection from their mothers should be achieved by December 2002. Implementation of universal antenatal testing has resulted in substantial improvements in recent years in maternal diagnosis rates. The 80% diagnosis target has already been met in London, where the prevalence of HIV infection is highest. Increased detection of HIV infections in expectant mothers means that fewer babies are becoming infected. It is estimated that infection was prevented for around 100 babies born to infected mothers in 2001.

[20] Office for National Statistics 2002.

The National Strategy for Sexual Health and HIV

267. With the aim to intensify its efforts in this area, the Government has set out plans to prevent the spread of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections in *the National Strategy for Sexual Health and HIV,* published in 2001. In order to reduce the prevalence of undiagnosed HIV infections, a national standard has been proposed, whereby all those attending sexual health clinics should be offered an HIV test as part of screening for sexually transmitted infections. The strategy also includes a goal to reduce the number of newly acquired HIV infections by 25% by 2007. The strategy highlights the importance of HIV prevention for those groups most at risk of HIV including men who have sex with men and people from high prevalence countries overseas. Existing national HIV health promotion work for gay men will continue and the Department is strengthening its national HIV health promotion work for African communities. Gay men remain the largest group in the UK affected by HIV/AIDS. In line with the Strategy the Department of Health launched in November 2002 a new public awareness campaign on sexually transmitted infection. The *Sex Lottery* campaign is aimed at 18-30 year olds and aims to increase awareness of STIs and the importance of condom use. £4 million over two years has been allocated to the campaign so far. The *Sex Lottery* campaign builds on the success of the Teenage Pregnancy campaign (which also includes STIs). See section on Teenage Pregnancy Programme for more information on approaches addressing sexual and reproductive health, including sexual violence.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

268. FGM is a brutal practice usually undertaken on girls between the ages of four and 10. It can have consequences for the health of the victim that can last her lifetime. The extent FGM is not known in this country, but based on the number of people who have settled here from parts of the world where the practice is endemic it has been estimated that 74,000 first generation immigrant women have undergone FGM and as many as 15,000 girls might be at risk of FGM in the UK.

269. FGM is illegal in the UK under the *Prohibition of Female Circumcision Act 1985*. The Government is working to extend the provisions of the 1985 Act. Under the *Female Genital Mutilation Bill*, a Private Members Bill introduced by Ann Clwyd MP on 11 December 2002, will, if it becomes law, restate and extend the provisions of the 1985 Act and give them extra-territorial effect (see article 16 for details). The Department of Health condemns the practice and in this is supported by the leading bodies in the medical field, all of which have issued guidance or position statements on FGM. In 2000, a doctor had his name removed from the medical register for offering to perform FGM on a young girl. Furthermore, the Government continues to fund the voluntary organisation, FORWARD, the leading body working in the FGM field in this country, with an annual grant to support its core activities, as well as two projects: one dealing with training for the range of professionals who work with children from the practising communities; and a second project to work with these communities on the extent of FGM, linked practices, such as early marriage and mobilising men in those communities. There are seven specialist clinics in the NHS that treat women and girls who have been mutilated. These clinics all have trained and culturally sensitive personnel who offer a range of healthcare services for these women and girls including reversal surgery. Services are confidential and in many cases interpreters are available. These clinics are open and a woman can attend these clinics without a referral from her own doctor.

Circulatory system/heart disease

National Service Framework for Coronary Heart Disease (NSF for CHD)

270. The Government, through the NSF is actively addressing gender-based inequalities requiring health professionals to take into account the special needs of women and be aware of differences in the presentation of symptoms. The National Service Framework for Coronary Heart Disease, published in 2000, is an evidence-based participatory (stakeholders include clinicians, patients, managers and Government) blueprint for how coronary heart disease services (in England) will be modernised over the next ten years. A key aim of the NSF for CHD is to tackle inequalities, both in incidence of disease and in access to services. Its underlying principle is that appropriate interventions should be offered to female and male patients who show symptoms or are at

risk of developing heart disease, regardless of age, gender, race, disability, sexual orientation or geography. For information on Government action to decrease the incident of strokes see annex 1 (article 12, p. 11).

Cardiovascular disease and cancer prevention

271. In order to reduce premature deaths from these diseases, the Government has been actively engaged in reducing the number of women and girl smokers, including pregnant women and women from ethnic minorities. Another key element is the improvement of nutrition and the promotion of physical activity aimed at reducing obesity. See annex 1 (article 12, pp. 11-13) for details on Government measures in these areas.

Breastfeeding

272. Breastfeeding for a prolonged period can reduce the risk of mothers developing pre-menopausal breast cancer. The Government is fully committed to the promotion of breastfeeding. The report of the 2000 quinquennial Survey on *Infant Feeding Practice*, published in May 2002, showed that between 1995 and 2000 breastfeeding rates increased from 66% to 69%. The greatest change since 1995 has been among those in the least advantaged social groups. Moreover, mothers now introduce solids later than in 1995. The Department of Health is promoting breastfeeding through:

- The Infant Feeding Survey, the results of which are summarised above.
- National Breastfeeding Awareness Weeks are held annually, with the aim of normalising breastfeeding through the provision of materials for the NHS.
- A Local Infant Feeding Audit (LIFA) has been piloted in 16 Trusts. This will enable trusts to take a 'snap shot' of information to find out whether local changes in practices are effective. Final reports were received end March 2002.
- The National Service Framework for Children will take forwards policy on breastfeeding.
- A Global Strategy on infant feeding recommending exclusive breastfeeding for six months has been put forward by the World Health Organisation. The UK supports this recommendation.
- The NHS has a target to deliver an increase of two percentage points per year in breastfeeding initiation rate, focussing especially on women from disadvantaged groups.

Cancer screening

Breast cancer and screening

273. The UK was the first country within the European Union, and one of the first in the world, to launch a nation-wide breast cancer-screening programme based on computerised call and recall in 1988. Women aged 50-64 are invited for breast screening by mammography every three years. Women over 70 can request free three yearly screening. The programme is being extended for women aged 65 to 70 over the next three years. The current service will also be upgraded by offering two-view mammography at all screening rounds leading to an estimated 43% improvement in the detection of small cancers. As at March 2001, 70.2% of women aged 50-64 invited for breast-screening in England had been screened at least once in the previous three years (69.3% at March 2000); for women aged 55-64, coverage improved from 75.6% to 76.2%. In 2000-01, 75% of women aged 50-64 invited for screening were screened and 1.3 million women of all ages were screened within the programme. 8,345 cases of cancers were diagnosed in women screened. Women invited to participate in the NHS Breast Screening Programme (NHSBSP) need to understand the potential benefits and harm in doing so to be able to make an informed choice about whether they wish to proceed. That is why information provided to women must be honest, comprehensive and understandable. As foreseen in the *NHS Cancer Plan*, the Government launched a national information leaflet on breast screening on 31st October 2000 that also can be viewed at www.cancerscreening.nhs.uk. Aware that women with learning disabilities often do not have the information and support they need to decide whether or not to attend for breast screening the Government has

produced a good practice guidance and a new information leaflet for women with learning disabilities (published in November 2000).

Cervical cancer and screening

274. The UK was the first country within the European Union, and one of the first in the world, to launch a nation-wide cervical screening programme in 1988 based on computerised call and recall. Women aged 20 to 64 are invited for a free cervical screening test every three to five years. Women aged over 65 are invited for screening if their previous two tests were not clear or if they have never been screened. As at March 2001, 83% of women aged 25-64 had been screened at least once in the previous 5 years. In 2000-01 3.6 million women were screened, the majority after a formal invitation from the screening programme. Laboratories examined an estimated 4.1 million smears. Over 8,000 lives were saved by the programme between 1988 and 1997. Death rates from cervical cancer fell by 42% between 1988 and 1997. Latest figures show that there were 1,039 deaths from cervical cancer in 2001, compared to 1,106 in 1999. Strict quality assurance is operated within the screening programme at a cost of £2.5 million a year. The performance of laboratories is kept under review. As foreseen by the *NHS Cancer Plan*, the Government launched a national information leaflet on cervical screening on 31st October 2001 (www.cancerscreening.nhs.uk). Good practice guidance and a new information leaflet for women with learning disabilities were published in November 2000.

Diabetes

275. The Government recognises the gender-based differences of the disease and has developed policies that take into account these differences. For information on the *National Service Framework for Diabetes Standards* see annex 1 (article 12, p. 13).

Sickle cell anaemia

276. The *NHS Plan* sets out the Government's commitment to introduce by 2004 a new and effective screening programme for women and children including a new national linked antenatal and neonatal programme for haemoglobinopathies (HbO) including sickle cell disease. For further information on Government action in this area see annex 1 (article 12, p. 13).

Mental health

277. As many as one in four people will experience a mental health problem at some time in their lives. Studies in the general population suggest that the overall prevalence of mental illness does not differ significantly between women and men. For specific disorders, however, clear gender differences emerge: anxiety, depression and eating disorders are more common in women; substance misuse and personality disorders are more common in men.

National Service Framework for Mental Health

278. Mental health is one of the three top clinical priorities in the NHS. The *Mental Health National Service Framework* (MHNSF) was published in September 1999. It sets out a ten-year programme, backed by additional funding, to put in place new high standards of care in every part of the country (England). The *NHS Plan*, published July 2000, makes a commitment to reduce inequalities and to develop a comprehensive health service designed around the needs and preferences of individual patients, their families and carers. The Plan sets out that by 2004, services would be redesigned to ensure there are women-only community day services in every health authority. In March 2001, the Government announced that a women's mental health strategy would be developed to help services better address the needs of women across a wider range of services. A women's mental health strategy consultation document was published in Autumn 2002, building on existing commitments to:

- develop women-only community day services;
- remove mixed-sex hospital accommodation in 95% of health authorities by 2002;
- the development of a strategy for women's secure care, with women being a priority for moving out of high secure care into more appropriate services.

The National Institute for Mental Health in England (NIMHE) was established in 2001 to assist front line staff in health and social care to implement policy and improve outcomes for people using mental health services. NIMHE programmes emphasise the importance of recognising the diversity of communities including the need to address issues of gender, race and culture.

Drugs and alcohol

279. For information on Government action targeting alcohol and drug misusers including the ten-year drugs strategy *Tackling Drugs to Build a Better Britain* and the National Treatment Agency for Substance Misuse see annex 1 (article 12, p. 13-14).

280. In 2002 the national drugs strategy was reviewed and the *Updated Drugs Strategy 2002* was produced.

Older women

281. Taking into account the changing demographics, the Government is intensifying its efforts in order to provide services that respond to the different needs and priorities of older women and men, and ensuring equal access to such services. The Government has appointed a National Director for Older People's Health and Care Services, in November 2000, with the task of helping the NHS to achieve real improvements in the standard of care for older women and men. At the heart of the Government's approach is person-centred care and delivering services that enable older people to maintain and regain their independence. In this context, the *National Service Framework for Older People* (NSF), published in March 2001, has been set up to focus specifically on addressing the health and care needs of older women and men. It sets new national standards and service models of care across health and social services for older women and men, ensuring that their individual needs are taken into account, and are supported by newly integrated services with a well co-ordinated, coherent approach. The NSF focuses on rooting out age discrimination, providing people-centred care, promoting older women and men's health and independence, and fitting services around older women and men's needs. For more information on progress made in this area see annex 1 (article 12, pp. 14-15).

Northern Ireland

282. A new public health strategy *Investing for Health,* published in March 2002, contains a framework for action to improve health and well-being and reduce health inequalities, including gender-based inequalities. The strategy is based on partnership working amongst Government Departments and public, voluntary and community bodies. The actions within *Investing for Health* include the development or review of a number of lifestyle health promotion strategies that will benefit women including breastfeeding, sexual health and teenage pregnancy.

Cancer

283. Breast cancer accounts for one in three cancer cases in women, one fifth of all new cancers diagnosed in women and almost one sixth of cancer deaths in women. The death rate from breast cancer is declining as a result of greater public awareness, the breast screening programme and earlier treatment. All women in Northern Ireland aged between 50 and 64 are routinely invited for screening every three years and it is proposed to extend this programme to include women 65 to 70. In priorities for action (2002-03) targets for uptake have been set at 75% by March 2003. The uptake rate in Northern Ireland in 2000-01 was 71.4%. Following the issue of new guidance to Boards in November 1997 there has been a gradual increase in the

uptake rates for cervical cancer screening from 68.2% in 1999 to 70.1% in 2001. In the priorities for action (2002-03) targets for uptake have been set at 72% by March 2003 and 75% by March 2004. In 1999, 36 women died from Cervical Cancer in Northern Ireland and the year 2000 saw a further reduction in deaths to 30.

Breastfeeding

284. There has been a significant increase in breastfeeding rates in Northern Ireland from 45% in 1995 to 54% in 2000. A Breastfeeding Strategy for Northern Ireland aimed at promoting and supporting breastfeeding was published in 1999. An Implementation Group has been established to oversee its implementation. The key areas identified for action are co-ordination of breastfeeding activities, commissioning support for breastfeeding mothers, raising public awareness and improving training for health professionals. Actions to date include the appointment of a breastfeeding co-ordinator, participation in breastfeeding awareness week and a conference to highlight the benefits of breastfeeding. In addition two hospitals and one Health and Social Services Trust in Northern Ireland have achieved World Health Organisation "Baby Friendly" status.

Sexual health

285. The Government recognises the importance of women's access to information and advice on sexual health and family planning services. A Working Group has been established to develop a Sexual Health Promotion Strategy. The Strategy, which will address issues such as reducing the rates of sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS, teenage pregnancies will also look at issues relating to education and access to information and services and will build upon recent sexual health promotion strategies developed by Health and social Services Boards.

Family Planning

286. In Northern Ireland family planning services are provided mainly by general medical practitioners, community and hospital family planning clinics, and by voluntary organisations. Women can therefore choose the provider from whom they wish to access the services. In the year 2000-01 approximately 150,000 women attended a general medical practitioner or family planning clinic for family planning services.

Teenage Pregnancy and Parenthood

287. Northern Ireland is committed to reducing the number of unplanned teenage pregnancies. The Programme for Government envisages the promotion of sexual health and the reduction of the number of unplanned births for mothers under the age of 20. A Strategy and Action Plan aimed at reducing the number of unplanned births among teenage mothers and minimising the adverse consequences of those births to teenage parents and their children was published in December 2002. The strategy takes account of the responses to the consultation report of the Working Group on Teenage Pregnancy and Parenthood entitled *Myths and Reality*. The Strategy and Action Plan sets targets for the reduction of the number of unplanned births to teenage mothers and includes actions to improve communication, promote education opportunities and the provision of user-friendly services. An Implementation Group has been established to oversee and drive forward the actions outlined in the Action Plan. Other initiatives during the period include funding packages in 2001 and 2002 for projects from the statutory, voluntary and community sectors to support action on reducing teenage pregnancy. A total of 62 projects received funding and these mainly concentrated in areas with high rates of teenage pregnancy. The projects included parent/child communication, young people's sexual health services and training in communication for those dealing with young people. In 2001-02 the Health Promotion Agency for Northern Ireland has updated information on rights and benefits for pregnant women and parents of young children in Northern Ireland in *The Pregnancy Book and Birth to Five*. These were published by the Agency in association with Health Promotion England and are available to first-time mothers through Health and Social Services Boards.

Drugs and alcohol

288. For information on Government action to reduce the number women and men smoking, drugs and alcohol misuse among women, and the number of deaths from Coronary Heart Disease see annex 1 (article 12, pp. 15-16).

Scotland

289. The White Paper, *Towards a Healthier Scotland,* presents the framework for the Scottish Executive approach to public health improvement. The White Paper aims to improve life circumstances (social inclusion, jobs, income, housing, education and environment) that impact on health. It also aims to tackle lifestyles such as poor diet and lack of exercise, tobacco, alcohol and drug misuse that lead to illness and early death, as well as tackle what can be prevented (such as heart disease, cancer and accidents) and to improve child, mental, oral and sexual health. Tackling inequalities is the overarching aim of the White Paper, including gender-based inequalities. Implementation of the White Paper's programme is being facilitated over the period 2000-04 by a £100 million Health Improvement Fund. Other funds are facilitating targeted interventions in specific areas of the overall programme, while general health spending is now allocated in a way that fully recognises the influence of deprivation and remoteness on healthcare needs. In Scotland, Health Boards assess the needs of women, men, boys and girls and provide services in accordance with those needs. The Priorities and Planning Guidance for the NHS in Scotland for 1999-2002, provides the overall policy context for the planning and delivery of health services and focuses the NHS in Scotland on the most important national priorities. The three clinical priorities for the NHS in Scotland are mental health, coronary heart disease and stroke, and cancer.

290. In December 2000, *Our National Health: a plan for action a plan for change*, the Scottish Health Plan, further committed NHS Scotland to ensuring that its staff were "professionally and culturally equipped to meet the distinctive needs of people and family groups from ethnic minority communities". A comprehensive "stocktake" of how local health services were responding to these challenges was published in December 2001 under the title *Fair for All*. Subsequently, a Health Department letter (HDL) developed the reports recommendations into a three-year programme of targets for delivering culturally competent health care in every NHS board area. The HDL covers five main areas: energising the organisation; human resources; community development; access; and demographic profile. NHS organisations are held accountable for delivering this programme of work through a Performance Assessment Framework that is part of NHS Scotland's Accountability Review process. The Chief Executive of every NHS organisation in Scotland has also personally pledged their commitment to this programme by signing the Commission for Racial Equality's *Leadership Challenge*. Moreover, to support the development of, and monitor the delivery of culturally competent services, an Ethnic Minority Resource Centre has been established in the Public Health Institute for Scotland.

Teenage Pregnancy

291. "Towards a Healthier Scotland" set a headline target of a 20% reduction in the rate of pregnancy among 13-15 year olds for the period 1995-2010. A £3 million 'Healthy Respect' National Health Demonstration Projects is operating in the Lothian area. It aims to radically transform teenage attitudes to sexual health and sexual relationships, reduce the level of teenage pregnancies and prevent the spread of sexually transmitted infections amongst Lothian's young people. It is made up of 12 projects which focus on 3 main issues: (1) Teenage Pregnancy — conception, birth and termination rates (2) Sexually Transmitted Infections (3) Young people's self-esteem and confidence. In relation to teenage pregnancies two targets have been set: To reduce the pregnancy rate amongst 13-15 year olds by 20% by 2010 and to reduce termination of pregnancies by 50% by 2010 without increasing the teenage birth rate (1998 baseline).

292. In April 2000 a grant of £150,000 was made to Brook in Scotland (subsequently renamed Caledonia Youth) for start-up costs for four new centres in Aberdeen, Dundee, Glasgow and Falkirk. The Scottish Executive is also committed to a substantial contribution to running costs. The first new Centre, in Glasgow,

opened by the Minister of Health and Community Care Malcolm Chisholm in May 2002. The second, in Dundee, began business in October 2002.

Sexual Health

293. The Scottish Executive plans to develop a national sexual health strategy for Scotland. One of the strategy's main aims is to tackle the high level of unwanted teenage pregnancies in Scotland. An Expert Group has been established to assist in the development of the strategy, by harnessing the expertise of respected practitioners at both local and national level. This strategy is in its final stages of preparation and is intended to be put out to consultation in 2003.

294. For information on the Government's actions to meet the needs of women suffering from mental health, including the *Framework for Mental Health Services in Scotland;* as well as measures to tackle alcohol and drugs misuse, and smoking see annex 1 (article 12, pp. 17-18).

Wales

295. The 1998 White Paper *NHS Wales — Putting Patients First* sets out the Government strategy for the NHS in Wales. The Government aims to ensure that women and men have equal access to health services. In this context, the White Paper proposed the establishment of National Service Frameworks for service priorities. In October 1998, the Government launched the *Strategic Framework for Public Health in Wales* that provides a framework for public health development taking into account, amongst other priorities, equal access to health services.

296. *Well Being in Wales*, issued for consultation in September 2002, builds on the foundations set by Better Health Better Wales. It develops further the Assembly Government's work to improve health and reduce inequalities through an integrated approach to policies and programmes. Professor Peter Townsend endorses this integrated approach in his report Targeting Poor Health. *Well Being in Wales* reinforces the Assembly Government's efforts to tackle the underlying socio-economic determinants of poor health across the Assembly Government's policy areas in partnership with the NHS, local government and other organisations including the voluntary sector organisations and community groups. *Well Being in Wales* provides the direction and national context for Local Health Boards and Local Authorities to produce in conjunction with other organisations, including the voluntary sector, and through consultation with local people the local health, social care and well being strategies which will see promoting health, and well being as important as ensuring effective and efficient health services for their local populations.

297. Action to address inequalities in health and the factors that cause them, was one of its priorities and a range of action has taken place as a result. This includes '*Targeting Poor Health*', a major review of the way resources are allocated to the NHS and action which has led to work on statistics on equity of access to health services and action to tackle the wider determinants of health in conjunction with the Assembly Government's other policy divisions. Action has also included the development of the Inequalities in Health Fund to stimulate and support action to tackle inequalities and the factors that cause them, including inequalities in access to health services. The Fund's initial focus has been on developing and supporting local partnership to reduce coronary heart disease. The Fund, which has a budget of £5 million in 2003-04 is currently supporting 66 projects in disadvantaged communities across Wales.

Family planning services and sexual health

298. The National Assembly for Wales launched the consultation document, *A Strategic framework for promoting sexual health in Wales*, in January 2000. Following consultation the Strategy's action plan was issued in October 2000. The Strategy aims to improve the sexual health of the population in Wales, narrow sexual health inequalities; and to enhance the general health and emotional well-being of the population by enabling and supporting fulfilling sexual relationships. The action plan outlines five objectives: ensure that all

young people receive effective education about sex and relationships as part of their personal and social development; ensure that all sexually active people have access to good quality sexual health advice and services; reduce rates of unintended teenage pregnancy; reduce incidence and prevalence of sexually transmitted infections; and strengthen monitoring, surveillance and research to support future planning of sexual health services and interventions.

299. Key achievements of the strategy include: new sex and relationships education guidance for schools; the development of local sexual health strategies and service specifications; a grant scheme which supports innovative provision of sexual health advice and free condoms to those most vulnerable to sexually transmitted infections and teenage pregnancy; public education campaigns on sexually transmitted infection prevention, and emergency hormonal contraception; targeted HIV health promotion campaigns for gay men; and the development of an All-Wales sexual health network.

Maternity Services

300. In June 2002 'Delivering the Future in Wales' was launched. Its aim is to use the full potential of midwives in collaboration with others, in developing a maternity service which provides a safe and positive experience for women and their families and a rewarding career for midwives. The underpinning values of the strategy are: women centred care, maintaining normality, developing the role of the midwife, improving quality of care and maintaining standards. It is the 4th briefing paper under the banner of 'Realising the Potential' A strategic framework for nursing, midwifery and health visiting into the 21st century.

Breast-feeding

301. A strategy was developed and launched in May 2002 'Investing in a Better Start: promoting Breasting in Wales'. To support this strategy the Welsh Assembly Government will be appointing an all Wales co-ordinator whose role will be to promote the implementation of the strategy.

Cancer

Breast cancer

302. Last report (Breast Test Wales (BTW) was established in 1988 to undertake the Welsh element of the NHS Breast Screening Programme (NHSBSP). It has contributed to a reduction in Wales by 2001 of deaths from breast cancer by 32% over those occurring when it was found. Like the rest of the NHSBSP, BTW invites women between the ages of 50 and 64 to be screened once every 3 years, with those over 64 being screened on request. In 2001 (the latest year for which figures are available), BTW screened 65,786 women with an uptake rate of 77%. A Charter Mark was awarded to BTW in 1995 and this was re-affirmed in 1999 and 2001. In 2000, the Welsh Assembly Government's Minister for Health and Social Services asked BTW to start putting in place the manpower and resources to enable the introduction, from 2001, of two view mammography for all routine screens undertaken within the NHSBSP. This was to improve yet further the quality and reliability of screens undertaken and this was implemented across Wales to time. The Minister also asked that once this had been achieved that BTW should start to work towards the age range of those receiving routine screening being extended from 50 to 64 to 50 — 70. Additional ring-fenced funding was provided for both these initiatives (£1.6m in 2003-04) and BTW and the Welsh Assembly Government are currently considering options for implementation of this extension with a view to it being introduced in a phased approach from 2003.

Cervical cancer screening

303. Cervical Screening Wales was set up in April 1999 following the publication of The National Service Framework for the Cervical Screening Programme in Wales in April 1999. This framework ensures that all women have access to a high quality service that operates to publish national standards and is monitored and outcome evaluated. It also ensures that there is a single point for accountability and performance management.

The target age group for cervical screening is women aged 20 to 64. The normal recall interval is three years. In 2001, Cervical Screening Wales carried out a one-year pilot study to evaluate the use "liquid based cytology" for cervical screening. The results of the pilot are being reviewed by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence, together with the results of similar pilots in England and Scotland. This will enable NICE to decide whether or not to recommend that this technique is introduced across Wales as the routine screening test for cervical cancer.

304. For Government action on mental health and Mental health and Hepatitis B among women see annex 1 (article 12, p. 18).

ARTICLE 13: SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC BENEFITS

305. The schemes, programmes and benefits described below apply equally in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

The Social Welfare System

Benefits for mothers

306. In October 1999 Working Families' Tax Credit (WFTC) replaced Family Credit as the main support mechanism for low paid working parents. Over 1.3 million families are now receiving WFTC over 500,000 more than received Family Credit. These families are on average receiving £40 more than they would under Family Credit. WFTC currently helps 689,000 female lone parents to supplement their earnings. All maintenance is disregarded as income in the calculation of awards for WFTC. Over half of families supported by WFTC are lone parent households. Couples can choose whether the credit is paid to the mother or the father. In 2002-03 WFTC guarantees a minimum income of £227 a week for parents moving into full time work.

307. From April 2003 WFTC has been replaced by two new tax credits, the Child and Working Tax Credits. The Child Tax Credit will provide a single, seamless system of income related support for families with children. It will bring together the assistance currently provided through the Children's Tax Credit, the child elements of the WFTC, the Disabled Person's Tax Credit (DPTC) and Income Support or Jobseeker's allowance. The Child Tax Credit will provide a secure stream of income for parents that do not depend on the employment status of the parents. The Child Tax Credit will be paid directly to the person with main responsibility for the care of the children in the family, usually the mother. The Working Tax Credit provides additional support to low paid workers and replicates support for working families through the adult elements of WFTC. From April 2003 the Child and Working Tax Credits together guarantee a minimum income of £237 a week for parents moving into full time work. The structure of the new tax credits offer several advantages over WFTC for women. For example, dual earner couples can combine their hours so no one person has to work full time to get the 30 hour element of the WTC, allowing them to choose a better balance of paid work and caring for their children. WFTC tapers from net income (after tax/National Insurance Contributions) whereas new tax credits taper from gross income (before tax/ National Insurance Contributions). The latter lowers average tax rate for dual earner couples, allows second earner to take home more pay, and improves second earner work incentives.

308. In August 2000, the entitlement conditions for Maternity Allowance were changed so that entitlement was based on earnings rather than National Insurance contributions allowing an additional 16,000 low paid women to receive maternity pay for the first time. These changes also increased Maternity Allowance by 15% for around 11,000 self-employed women who received less benefit than employed women. The Green Paper, Work and Parents: Competitiveness and Choice, published by the Department of Trade and Industry in December 2000, outlined a new package of family friendly policies, including major improvements to maternity rights. This was kick started in April 2002 when the standard rate of Statutory Maternity Pay and Maternity Allowance was increased by 20% from £62.20 to £75 a week. Further improvements to these benefits took place in April

2003 when the standard rate was increased to £100 a week and the payment period extended from 18 week to 26 weeks. These and other important changes for working parents were introduced by the Employment Act 2002 and subsequent regulations — see Articles 2 and 11.

Taxes and family benefits

309. In its 1999 Budget, the Government launched a major reform of the personal tax allowances to focus resources on families with children. The married couple's allowance was generally withdrawn from 2000-01. The Government, however, felt it right to protect older couples so it was retained when one of the spouses was born before 6 April 1935. The additional personal allowance (the equivalent relief given to single people or unmarried couples who were responsible for children), and the widow's bereavement allowance for deaths after 5 April 2000 were also abolished. The allowances were replaced by the children's tax credit from April 2001. It is available to married or unmarried couples and to single parents with children under 16 living with them. There is one credit per family. It can reduce the amount of tax that a family pays in 2002-03 by up to £529 (well over twice the level of the standard married couple's allowance). In order to concentrate the benefit on families with lower incomes the children's tax credit is gradually withdrawn from families where there is a higher rate taxpayer. From April 2002, to help families with a new baby, there is a higher rate of children's tax credit in the year of their child's birth worth up to £1,049 a year.

310. In 2003, the Government will introduce the new Child Tax Credit. This will reform the system further by bringing together the children's tax credit and other income-related support to families with children into one seamless system. The Government believes that work is the best route out of poverty for families with children. The Government's reforms, including WFTC, have eased the burden on parents seeking to balance work and childcare, making it easier for one parent in the couple to remain at home to care for their children. Reforms to the structure of support including the introduction of the new tax credits improve the financial returns to work for parents seeking to re-enter employment. The childcare tax credit element of WFTC introduced in 1999 will be continued in the Working Tax Credit. The childcare tax credit element currently supports 70% of eligible childcare costs up to limits of £200 for two or more children and £135 for one child. The childcare tax credit element of WFTC supports 175,100 low and middle-income families, enabling them to balance work and family commitments better. The new tax credits will provide help with childcare costs to families further up the income distribution. For example, a family with two children, maximum childcare costs and an income of £35,000 a year can, as a result of the Working and Child Tax Credit, receive over £50 a week in financial support. This will be of particular benefit to women who want to work, but who find it difficult to afford quality childcare.

Income support

311. People whose resources are below prescribed levels may be able to claim Income Support, Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit. Income Support is a non-contributory benefit that is available to people who work fewer than 16 hours or more a week or whose partner works fewer than 24 hours a week. Families claiming Income Support receive a Family Premium and there is a part-time earnings disregard of £10 a week for a couple or £20 a week for a lone parent. Around 961,000 lone parents receive Income Support, the vast majority of whom are women. Families and lone parents also receive additional premiums with Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit. An earnings disregard of £25 a week applies in these benefits for lone parents, and there is a £15 a week maintenance disregard. From April 1997 the additional premium paid to lone parents in Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance, Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit was incorporated into the Family Premium to create a higher rate of Family Premium for lone parents called Family Premium (Lone Parent). The Family Premium (Lone Parent) in Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit is higher than the corresponding premium in Income Support. From April 1998 new lone mothers received the same rate of Family Premium as mothers with partners, but existing recipients continue to receive Family Premium (Lone Parent) as long as they continue to satisfy the entitlement conditions.

Statutory Sick Pay (SSP)

312. From October 2002, the provision limiting entitlement to employees who have been continuously employed for a period of 3 months or more was removed. From this date all employees regardless of their length of contract may be entitled to SSP provided they satisfy the remaining qualifying conditions. The provisions are a result of the European Directive on Fixed Term Workers and are enacted in regulations arising from the *Employment Act 2002*. While not directly targeted at women the change nonetheless improves the provision of sick pay for those workers who are women.

Child Benefit

313. Child Benefit provides virtually all families, around 7 million, with a contribution towards the cost of bringing up children. It is normally paid to the mother. Both the higher rate for the eldest child and the rate for each subsequent child continue to be increased each year in line with prices. From April 2003 the amount paid for the first child is £16.05 a week, and for second and subsequent children, £10.75 a week. Since 1997 the rate for the first/eldest child has increased in real terms by 25%. As part of the reform of the financial support for children the administration of Child Benefit transfers to the Inland Revenue from April 2003 and will be paid in addition to the new Child Tax Credit.

Bereavement benefits

314. With effect from 9 April 2001 widow's benefits were replaced by bereavement benefits for men and women becoming widowed from that date. The previous report included information about the proposals for and consultation on change. As a consequence of the Welfare Reform and Pensions Act 1999 the new scheme provides: a lump sum of £2,000 immediately on bereavement; a Widowed Parent's Allowance to widows and widowers until the youngest child in the family ceases full time education; and a Bereavement Allowance for 12 months to widows and widowers aged 45 and over with no dependent children. None of the changes affected existing widows, people over state pension age or war widows. Bereavement benefits are equally accessible to both men and women on the basis of the National Insurance contributions of the deceased spouse (as widow's benefits were based on the contributions of the deceased husband). For the first time a woman's contributions from paid employment provide equal support in bereavement for her spouse and dependent children in the event of her death during working age when her family would be deprived of her earnings.

Pensions

315. The Government is committed to ensuring that pension reforms improve women's pension rights. The proportion of women receiving a basic state pension in their own right is increasing and it is estimated that in future years more and more women will become entitled to a basic state pension in their own right reflecting increased female participation in the labour market. The Government also recognises the importance of providing sound information on the type of pension provision that best suits women's individual needs and circumstances. Clear and understandable guidance is already available to assist people in planning for their pension provision. A series of leaflets has been produced to inform people of the pensions options open to them. One of these, *Pensions for Women — Your guide,* outlines the pension options available specifically for women. The Pensions Act 1995 equalises the state pension age for men and women at 65 by 2020, as well as the age up to which men and women are required to pay National Insurance contributions; it also introduces a fully equalised state pension scheme. Older women are not affected by the change to the state pension age, that will be phased in over a 10-year period from 2010. The Government has introduced a range of policies that directly benefit older women as described below. Also see article 3 on Government action to alleviate poverty among women, including older women, for further details.

Occupational Pensions

316. The Government is committed to improving second tier pension provision, particularly amongst women. The Government recognises that, whilst the proportion of women who have occupational and personal pensions is increasing, it is still below that of men. Amendments to domestic legislation made in 1995 (see previous report for details) have improved access to occupational pension schemes and rights to equal benefits under such schemes for a significant number of women, particularly those who have been discriminated in the past because they worked part-time. Since 1999, there has been litigation in the European Court of Justice and in the domestic courts to ensure that women who have previously been denied access to membership of their employers' occupational pension schemes on the basis of their part-time status can be awarded retrospective rights to membership of, and benefits under, those schemes in a manner consistent with principles of EU law in this area. Domestic legislation will be further amended to ensure that it is completely in line with EU law in this area.

Stakeholder pensions

317. The *Welfare Reform and Pensions Act 1999* provided for the introduction of stakeholder pensions from April 2001. These are simple, low charge, flexible pensions not restricted to those who are working. Women who wish to save towards a decent income in retirement can now do so and benefit from tax relief on the contributions paid into a stakeholder pension. Stakeholder pensions can be moved between providers without charge. . The flexibility of stakeholder pensions means that they are a good option for women who take a break from work as contributions can be stopped and restarted without penalty. This is beneficial to those women in the modern labour market who move regularly between employers and occupations and who, at different times, may be self-employed, employed on a limited term contract or on a permanent contract. As stakeholder pensions are open to non-earners, women who are not employed but can afford to save something towards their retirement are able to do so. Stakeholder pension rules also allow family or friends to contribute towards someone else's pension, which may help the large number of women who are carers.

State Second Pensions

318. The State Second Pension was introduced by the *Child Support, Pensions and Social Security Act 2000.* From April 2002, State Second Pension reforms the State Earnings-Related Pension Scheme (SERPS). State Second Pension offers people earning less than the statutory lower earnings threshold (currently £11,200), many of whom are women, a second pension equivalent to double the amount SERPS would have paid to somebody earning £11,200. Those needed at home to care for young children, most of whom are women, carers, and disabled people will also be entitled to State Second Pension.

Pensions on Divorce

319. The *Pensions Act 1995*, which came into force in 1996, extended the courts' powers in relation to the treatment of pensions on divorce. In particular, the earmarking provisions introduced by the *Matrimonial Causes Act 1973* were extended. These enabled a court to order a pension scheme member to pay part or all of his/her pension when it became payable to the former spouse. This applied to the lump sum payment and/or the periodical payments. The new provisions contained in the *Pensions Act* enable the court to order a pension scheme to pay part or all of a scheme member's pension, when it becomes payable, direct to the former spouse on the member's behalf. This is known as "attachment". Key elements of the provisions include: clarification of the court's duty to take pension rights into account when considering the financial settlement on divorce; the attachment provisions remove the need for the former spouse to rely on the scheme member passing on payments; powers to enable the courts to order pension schemes to make payment of a lump sum payable on the death of a scheme member direct to a third party nominated by the scheme member. The Pensions Act made similar changes to divorce law in Scotland.

Pension Sharing

320. Under earmarking provisions, the title to the pension rights remains with the pension scheme member. The provisions do not allow a clean financial break in a divorce settlement and they leave the former spouse at risk of losing the intended retirement income if the scheme member dies. With the introduction of the *Welfare Reform and Pensions Act 1999*, the Government introduced pension sharing as a further option available to divorcing couples and the courts to determine the financial settlement on divorce. The policy proposals were developed in partnership with the pensions industry, family lawyers and groups representing divorcing couples. Both primary and secondary draft legislation, which allow pension rights to be treated like other assets and the whole, or a proportion, of their value to be transferred from one spouse to the other as part of the financial settlement, were subject to extensive consultation. The pension sharing legislation came into force on 1 December 2000 for divorces where proceedings were commenced on or after this date. Pension sharing applies equally to both men and women. Due to the current distribution of pension rights the main beneficiaries are women. Pension sharing enables a divorcing wife to obtain a fairer financial settlement on divorce and a secure income in retirement.

Help for Poorest Pensioners

Minimum Income Guarantee

321. From April 2002 the Government is spending around £6 billion extra a year in real terms on pensioners as a result of policies it has introduced since 1997. That includes £2.5 billion more spending for the poorest third of pensioners in 2002-03, three times more than an earnings link in the basic state pension since 1998 would have given them. The Minimum Income Guarantee (MIG) for low-income pensioners, most of whom are women, allows people to have £12,000 savings and still qualify for extra support. From April 2003, the MIG will rise from £98.15 to £102.10 for single pensioners and from £149.80 to £155.80 for couples. The MIG has increased at least in line with earnings each year since 1999. Currently, over 1.7 million pensioners, 1.15 million of whom are women, are in receipt of the MIG. A number of measures have been put in place to identify those pensioners who may be entitled to the MIG but have not claimed it. These measures include: a shortened claim form; callers to the telecentre who are not receiving the MIG are encouraged to claim; and a data matching exercise to automatically identify entitlement following a key life event or receipt of another benefit. A MIG claim line has also been set up to allow pensioners to make a claim over the phone. From October 2003, the MIG will be replaced by the Pension Credit From October 2002, female and male pensioners in Scotland benefit, as a minimum, from free off-peak local bus travel within existing concessionary fares schemes boundaries.

Pension Credit

322. The *State Pension Credit Act 2002* received Royal Assent in June 2002. The Act provides for the introduction of the Pension Credit, a key part of the Government's strategy for combating pensioner poverty. Following the implementation of the Minimum Income Guarantee (MIG), the Government recognised that large numbers of pensioners were subject to arbitrary assessment rules dating back 50 years that penalised them for having savings or second pensions. The Pension Credit has been designed to remove those penalties and, in their place, institute a system that rewards those who have been prudent and have saved for their retirement. From October 2003, the Pension Credit will replace MIG. The Pension Credit provides that no-one aged 60 or over need live on less than a guaranteed weekly income of £102.10 (£155.80 for couples). Also, for the first time, it rewards those pensioners with modest savings and income, rather than penalising them. People aged 65 and over will be able to earn a savings credit of up to £14.79 (£19.20 for couples). The design of the scheme will greatly reduce the complexity attached to previous income-related schemes. There will be more generous rules on the treatment of capital, the £12,000 exclusion that existed under the old scheme will be abolished and most people aged 65 or over will need to report fewer changes in their circumstances – increases in second pensions and in savings will not need to be reported at all for periods of up to five years. There will be a nation-wide marketing campaign to promote the Pension Credit, and all pensioners will receive direct mail

advising them about the scheme and how to apply for it. Two thirds of those eligible for the Pension Credit will be women and approximately 60% of all women over 80 will be entitled to the Pension Credit.

Winter Fuel Payments

323. Winter Fuel Payments, an annual lump sum paid to provide help to eligible older people throughout Great Britain towards their winter fuel bills, were increased to £100 for each eligible household for the winter of 1999-2000 and to £200 for each eligible household from winter 2000-01. The Winter Fuel Payment scheme was extended to cover most men and women from age 60, regardless of whether they are receiving social security benefit. Therefore, women aged 60 and over who had no entitlement to Retirement Pension or other social security benefits have become eligible for payments. It was announced in July 2002 that, under European social security co-ordinating regulations, people who qualify for a Winter Fuel Payment in the UK might be able to continue receiving payments if they move to another EEA country. During winter 2001-02, around 8 million households benefited. Of the 11.2 million payments made to individuals, over 6.3 million went to women.

Carers

324. Some 467,000 carers — almost three quarters of them women — are entitled to Carer's Allowance (CA), formerly known as Invalid Care Allowance. Over 230,000 of these — almost one half — are entitled to the carer premium in the income-related benefits through entitlement of CA. Carers are now benefiting from a package of extra help worth £500 million over 3 years. This started with increases in the CA earnings limit and in the carer premium from April 2001. From 28 October 2002 carers aged 65 or over have been able to claim CA for the first time, and entitlement can continue for up to 8 weeks following the death of person being cared for. In addition, carers will build up State Second Pension for each full tax year.

Child support

325. The Government recognises that all children have the right to the financial and emotional support of both parents. Children are better off, financially and emotionally, when both parents meet their responsibilities. The overwhelming majority of parents with caring responsibilities (around 95%) are women. In 2000 Parliament passed the *Child Support, Pensions and Social Security Act*. This contained the Government's proposals for a reformed child support system. The key features of the new scheme are:

- New maintenance calculation — simple deductions of 15% (one child), 20% (two children) and 25% (three or more children) of non-resident parent's net income. Allowances will be made for any children in the current household of the non-resident parent.
- Special Rates for those on a low income. Non-resident parents (NRP) with net earnings of £100 a week or less will pay a flat rate of £5. Those earning between £100-200 a week will pay a reduced rate on a sliding scale related to their income. NRPs on benefits will pay a flat rate of £5 a week.
- Shared care — non-resident parents who care for their children for one night a week or more will be eligible for a reduced maintenance calculation.
- Child Maintenance Premium — parents with care on Income Support or income-based Jobseeker's Allowance will keep up to £10 a week of the maintenance paid for their children, without it affecting their benefit.
- Variations scheme – A Maintenance Calculation can be adjusted either up or down to have certain child-related expenses or special circumstance taken into account (for example, costs of keeping in contact with a child).
- Phasing – To ease transition to a different liability under the new scheme, converted cases' new liability will be phased in over (up to) five years.
- Since January 2001 the CSA have been able to use a number of new powers aimed at improving compliance. These include a fine of up to £1,000 for refusal to provide information and for providing false

information, and (since April 2001) where the non-resident parent will not pay, he/she can be disqualified from driving as an alternative to imprisonment.
- No account will be taken of the parent with care or their partner's income.
- The new scheme will improve the situation for lone mothers — maintenance should be assessed quickly and accurately, providing a vital bridge from dependency on benefit to the world of work.

326. These changes were introduced for new cases from 3rd March 2003. Existing cases will convert to the new scheme on a date yet to be announced.

Northern Ireland

New Targeting Social Need

327. *New Targeting Social Need* (TSN) is Northern Ireland's main policy for tackling poverty and social exclusion. New TSN aims to tackle social need and social exclusion by targeting efforts and available resources within existing Departmental programmes towards women and men, groups and areas in greatest social need. Those in greatest social need must be identified objectively and targeted fairly, regardless of attributes such as gender, religion or race. New TSN does not discriminate against any section of the community. The policy is being advanced through three complimentary elements: tackling unemployment and increasing employability; tackling inequality in other policy areas such as health, housing and education; and Promoting Social Inclusion. The Promoting Social Inclusion (PSI) element of New TSN involves Departments working together and with partners outside Government to identify and tackle factors that can contribute to social exclusion and undertake positive initiatives to improve and enhance the life and circumstances of the most deprived and marginalized women and men in Northern Ireland. Moreover, PSI looks at issues that impact women, including teenage pregnancy and carers.

328. New TSN is unique in that it is not a programme with its own budget. Instead it is a policy running through all relevant existing spending programmes across all Northern Ireland Departments. Every Department has produced a New TSN Action Plan showing how it will implement New TSN through existing and new programmes. These Plans identify the social needs that Departments are tackling and contain the actions and targets that Departments' delivery of New TSN can be judged on. As required, within the Northern Ireland Executive Programme For Government, an independent external evaluation of New TSN was commissioned in September 2002, to assess the way in which the policy has been implemented so far and to examine its impact. The results of the evaluation are due to be presented in 2003. The evaluation will define the future direction of the policy.

Scotland

329. In November 1999 the Scottish Executive published its Social Justice Strategy — *a Scotland where everyone matters* — setting out its 10 long-term targets and 29 milestones. Factors impacting on poverty and exclusion are wide-ranging so the strategy covers education, jobs, health, justice, housing and communities. Progress is reported in the Social Justice Annual Reports, with the Executive moving to further disaggregate data on women where appropriate. Currently data on women is available for 18 of the 29 milestones, e.g. smoking during pregnancy has reduced from 27% in 1999 to 25% in 2001.

Wales

330. The Welsh Assembly Government provides financial support for a voluntary-sector body (*Chwarae Teg*) that undertakes a range of activity to promote the position of women in the labour market in Wales. This includes providing enterprise advice for women and working with employers to help them with their equality policies. The Assembly Government also promotes work-life balance policies, including pilot projects in the public sector and a Challenge Fund for small and medium-sized enterprises.

Travel and crime and fear of crime on public transport

331. One aspect of the vision of the Government's Ten Year Transport Plan is for safer and more secure transport that is accessible to women and men. The Plan also recognises that improving public transport is vital in reducing social exclusion, particularly for people who have less access to a car (including women). Although men and women make a similar number of journeys overall, they make them for different purposes, which reflect their different lifestyles at different ages. Since 1999, the Department for Transport (formally the Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions) has continued its rolling programme of initiatives to reduce crime and fear of crime on public transport. While these measures will benefit both women and men they will particularly benefit women as they are the main public transport users:

- Produced a briefing paper highlighting public transport crime as an issue that Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships need to address. The paper was launched and publicised at a series of 10 regional seminars between November 2001 and January 2002 attended by regional transport and crime agencies;
- In 2000 issued *Women and Public Transport – the Checklist* to local government transport planners to improve public transport services for women. This includes good practice on personal security;
- In 2002 members of the Women's Transport Network held a forum on *Women's Transport* to discuss the key transport issues for women and consider how to take these issues forward through an action plan.
- In 2002, *Get on board: an agenda for improving personal security in bus travel* guidance and case studies report were published and widely disseminated to transport planners, operators, Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships, and other interested agencies;
- Currently supporting a 2 year pilot project looking at delivering a secure transport route, including on vehicle, railway lines, bus stops, taxi ranks, car parks and the local pedestrian environment along the route and termini of the line;
- Current joint project with the Strategic Rail Authority to look at ways to improve personal security in train travel;
- Commissioned further research on perceptions of personal security on public transport. Part of this research involves an evaluation of a number of Departmental initiatives to improve personal security in transport and the impact they have on people's perceptions;
- In 2002 launched a new official-level group on bus and coach security issues, called the Safer Travel on Buses and Coaches Panel (STOP). This group brings together operators, unions, transport and local authorities and the police, as well as Department for Transport and Home Office officials, to consider how best to tackle bus and coach-related crime and to spread good practice throughout the industry;
- The number of stations accredited under the Secure Stations Scheme (designed to improve and standardise good security practices at all overground and underground stations) has steadily grown since its launch in 1998. Approximately two thirds of all overground rail journeys and one third of all London Underground journeys involve passengers starting or finishing their journey at a Secure Station;
- Some minority ethnic and faith groups express significantly higher levels of fear on public transport than the majority of the population. Department for Transport commissioned a project to examine the transport needs of different minority ethnic and faith communities are initially took forward the findings with operators, passengers and other groups in a series of workshops during 2002, this work will help shape the final stage of the project when the results of the initiatives and trials implemented by participating organisations as a result of the workshops will be presented at a number of conferences in 2003;
- Recently commissioned to see the link between bus related crime and other crimes and identify how measures to tackle bus related incidents could provide police with a gateway to apprehend perpetrators of other crimes;
- During 2003 good practice guidance will be issued on reducing graffiti and other environmental nuisance on and around transport systems.

Older women

332. The Government recognise the importance to pensioners of low-cost public transport; want to ensure that bus travel remains within the means of those on limited income. From June 2001 the Government has made local bus travel more affordable through half-fare minimum concessionary fares provision for pensioners in England. The introduction of minimum half fares on local bus services has helped some seven million older and disabled people in England. Local authorities with less generous schemes or no scheme at all, now have to offer at least the minimum standard.

333. See article 14 for information on rural transport.

Northern Ireland

334. Under Northern Ireland's Regional Transportation Strategy (RTS), women will benefit from a number of initiatives and improved services. As women are generally greater users of both bus and rail services, these schemes will clearly improve the services available to women. On rail services, women in particular will benefit from the provision of modern rolling stock to replace all existing trains and from additional levels of service, the retention of the rail network, refurbishment of stations and access improvements to and at railway stations. Women in particular will benefit from bus fleet replacement of the modern, low-floor variety, additional and increased levels of service throughout the region, enhanced bus stop and access facilities, refurbishment of bus stations and access improvements to and at bus stations. Benefits will also arise from the rapid transit system, through the provision of fast, modern vehicles and associated facilities. Other initiatives under the RTS where women in particular will benefit include measures making it easier to walk and cycle, traffic calming, investment in car parks, the street lighting capital programme, improved travel information and enhanced facilities for taxis.

335. New measures have also been introduced to increase women's safety when travelling on public transport. These include improved lighting for new bus shelters and in all new rail stations and bus depots; radio contact for all late night bus services in Belfast; double-glazed windows on all new buses and trains and greater use of on-board video on Citybus services. In addition, specific buggy spaces have been introduced on buses together with additional signage to advise that prams and buggies can be accommodated to assist women travelling with small children. In addition to schemes specifically targeting the needs of women in rural areas (Article 14), the introduction of new low floor buses on the Quality Bus Corridors in Belfast will improve the transport services available to women across the city. This supports the objective of improving public transport in order to increase social mobility and allows women to enjoy greater access to opportunities for employment, education and training.

Scotland

336. An integrated transport policy for Scotland is being implemented. These measures were set out in the White Paper Travel Choices for Scotland. Its aim is to develop an effective, sustainable and integrated transport system appropriate to the needs of the people, economy and environment of Scotland. It will provide effective transport alternatives to the car wherever practical. Specific attention will be given to addressing the particular transport needs of women. For example, women in rural areas are particularly disadvantaged because of lack of public transport. Elderly and mobility impaired women and mothers with children will also benefit from improvements in public transport services and increased personal security.

Wales

337. The Welsh Assembly Governments plans for an integrated transport system in Wales are set out in the Transport Framework for Wales. The main aims of this strategy are to provide Wales with an integrated, accessible and efficient transport system that promotes safety, healthier lifestyles and care for the environment. The Transport Framework also works towards the 3 strategic aims of the Assembly, sustainable development,

tackling social disadvantage, promoting equal opportunities. In order to achieve the latter aim the Assembly is carrying through a number of activities to reduce the barriers that insufficient access to transport can create for women. Together with Crime Concern, local authorities, bus operators and the police, we have established the Secure Bus Steering Group. Crime Concern will produce a scheme to accredit bus stations where crime is below a certain level, and where passengers feel safe. Pilots will have been completed by the end of March 2003.The Welsh Assembly Government's policy guaranteeing free concessionary travel for pensioners and disabled people on local bus services is immensely popular, and has been extended to include men over the age of 60 from April 2003. The Assembly has taken a leading role in the report of the Transport and Employment Working Group, which has assessed what more needs to be done to enhance public transport where large numbers of unemployed people find this a significant barrier in getting work, including young women.

ARTICLE 14: RURAL WOMEN

Institutions in rural UK

338. The Countryside Agency is the government agency responsible for promoting social and economic opportunity for rural women and men. The White Paper *Our Countryside; the future* published in November 2000, introduced a Rural Services Standard with the aim to facilitate women and men's access to public services in rural areas. The Countryside Agency has responsibility for monitoring the standards annually and making suggestions for further developments.

Equal opportunities for women in rural areas

339. The Department mainstreams a gender perspective into its work, ensuring that policies across Government take into account the differential economic, social and environmental impacts on rural communities. Women are well-represented on the Rural Affairs Forum, that provides a voice into the heart of government for those who live and work in the countryside. The Mid-Term Review of the EU Common Agricultural Policy offers a major opportunity to redirect resources investing in rural development measures of real value to the wider rural economy. The Government is working to ensure that rural areas provide an attractive future for women and their families; and that means a greater focus on environmental, rural development, and community issues. We have worked with partners to improve rural services such as schools, policing, post offices and childcare. 1,500 villages will benefit from the Countryside Agency's £15 million Vital Villages Programme; other benefits include 5,000 extra affordable homes in villages between 2000 and 2004.

Rural transport

340. Cars are the main mode of transport for both rural men and women. Driving licence holding for rural women has increased by nearly a fifth over the last 10 years, whereas the proportion of men holding licences has changed little. Recognising that rural women are more likely to rely on public transport than men, the Government is working to ensure that public transport services take into account women's needs and concerns (e.g. improve access, increase safety). Following a review of its previous transport grant schemes (the Rural Transport Partnership scheme and the Rural Transport Development Grant), the Countryside Agency has developed the new Rural Transport Partnership scheme (RTP). This opened for applications from 2 April 2001. Funding each year for the three financial years starting April 2001 is £8m, £12m and £12m respectively. The overall objective of the scheme is to enhance rural transport services to secure a long-term improvement in women and men's access to jobs, services and social activities and in visitor's sustainable access to the countryside. This will help to tackle social exclusion and isolation. Each Rural Transport Partnership is required to undertake a transport needs assessment to identify the most appropriate solutions for addressing the needs of local women and men. Some of the research funded through the RTP scheme has specifically addressed the transport issues that affect women in rural areas, for example, one recent study investigated the issues affecting women in the Forest of Dean who wish to access employment, education or training. The study suggested ways in which an existing *Wheels to Work* scheme could provide better assistance to women and also identified a number of recommendations connected to both employment and transport policy.

341. The current Government initiative Modernising Government aims to ensure that the needs of different social groups are taken into consideration in policy development and service delivery. All policies and programmes should be reviewed to ensure that there are no disproportionate effects on different groups of people. In 2000 the Department for Transport commissioned the Public Gender Audit to identify women's transport needs and ways to meet such needs. The findings were translated into a check list audit pack for use by managers to raise awareness of the gender differences in use and experiences of public transport by men and women; assess how well the organisation meets women's needs; identify priorities for improvement; and measure progress towards targets. The impact of the checklist is being monitored through a comprehensive review of local authorities Local Transport Plans and Annual Progress Reports. This review is looking for evidence of commitment to and good practice in the development, design and provision of transport services by local authorities. It will be repeated annually. Recognising that women, due to fear of violence, are less willing to travel after dark, the Department has a rolling programme of initiatives to tackle crime and the fear of crime across the 'whole journey'. The Government is encouraging the spread of best practice in crime prevention techniques on public transport through guidance to operators, local authorities and other interested parties. The Mobility and Inclusion Unit have published Guidelines for Transport Operators on Personal Security on Public Transport and guidelines about personal security in bus travel to improve security. Additionally, Local Transport Plans are required to address personal security issues in all modes and across the whole journey.

Childcare in rural areas

342. The Countryside Agency and its predecessors over a number of years have built up quite considerable knowledge and expertise on childcare provision in rural communities. In November 1999 the Agency launched a Rural Children's and Young People's Forum with support from the Department for Education and Skills to take forward work in this area. The Forum is intended to play a key role in exchanging information, sharing good practice, assisting policy development and monitoring provision and raise the profile of rural children's needs. The Forum is made up of people from the voluntary, public and private sectors and representatives from government departments. Sure Start is a key part of the Government's strategy to end child poverty by 2020 (see article 10). A number of rural Sure Start programmes are being implemented with the aim to improve service delivery and the problems of addressing disadvantage that is hidden, often masked by affluence and occurring in often quite small pockets. The Agency is monitoring the progress and development of all the Sure Start programmes and expects to monitor the mini programmes when they get underway next year.

Rural development

343. The England Rural Development Programme (ERDP) implements the EU Rural Development Regulation in England aimed at providing new opportunities for farmers and others to protect and improve the countryside, to develop sustainable rural enterprise, and to help rural communities to thrive. By the end of 2006, the Programme, partly financed by the EU, will have provided over £1.6 billion in support. The Programme provides the opportunity for many farm businesses to explore new sources of farm income and will be available to all eligible applicants, both men and women. Survey evidence shows that women play an important strategic role on the farm, in terms of both the traditional agricultural enterprises and new enterprises. (72% oversee the farm's accounts; two thirds are partners in the farm business; half are involved in management and planning of the farm business; over a third are responsible for a new enterprise on the farm). In view of women's role in rural areas, some elements of the Programme can be identified as being particularly relevant to women in rural areas.

- The Rural Enterprise Scheme, which provides grants for developing sustainable rural businesses. Some elements of this scheme (e.g. marketing of quality agricultural products, diversification of agricultural activities, encouragement for tourist and craft activities) provide opportunities for introducing innovative farm-based business activities where women have a particularly strong role. It also provides scope for collaborative working and support systems outwith the farm to enable farm women to seek employment while coping with farm and family duties.

- Training can allow women in rural areas to obtain and develop the skills and the means to use new qualifications, either on-farm or in the wider rural economy. The Vocational Training Scheme (part of the ERDP) provides grants towards training for farmers and foresters.
- Processing and marketing initiatives in rural areas can provide new employment opportunities for women and for men. Under the ERDP, support is available for such initiatives through the Processing and Marketing Grant.

Northern Ireland

344. The Government's Agri-Food Development Service (AFDS) offers a comprehensive education, training and lifelong learning provision. Equality of opportunity in terms of access and participation is provided for all members of farming families. Some of the lifelong learning programmes, particularly Information and Communications Technology training, have included large numbers of rural women. AFDS Advisers also play key roles in providing competence development support to rural women through their work with groups like the *Women in Agriculture* and *East Antrim Ladies Farm Forum*.

345. The Rural Development Programme (2001-06) emerged from a series of consultation exercises and evaluations that began in 1997. One of the main guiding principles for implementing the Programme is the promotion of equality of opportunity and inclusion. Under the Capacity Building element of the Programme there will be opportunities for rural women to develop the skills, knowledge and experience that they need to play a part in the economic, environmental and social changes impacting on rural areas. The Local Regeneration element of the Programme will provide opportunities for women's groups and organisations to bring forward proposals for consideration. The Rural Development Council will be pro-active in seeking applications from women's groups in rural areas and ensure that, women are represented on the committees of funded projects.

346. Other initiatives include a *Needs Analysis for the Rural Women's Sector* to address the needs of rural women. The Rural Development Council has an approved Equality Scheme. The Scheme sets out the Council's plan for meeting its statutory obligations on the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations over a five-year period. The Department for regional Development has submitted a number of public transport projects under the various EU Programmes that will benefit the rural population of Northern Ireland. As women are generally considered to be greater users of bus and rail services, these schemes will clearly improve the services available to women. In addition the Department operates the Rural Transport Fund, a scheme designed to reduce social exclusion by increasing accessibility and mobility in rural areas. It currently supports both community transport partnerships and Ulsterbus services in rural and deprived areas. Women in general and in particular, those caring for either young or older dependents will benefit from the services provided through this Fund.

Scotland

347. The Scottish Rural Partnership Fund (SRPF) was established in 1996 to provide resources to support community development throughout rural Scotland and totalled £2.8 million in 2002/03. Within it, the Rural Challenge Fund aims to encourage women and young people to take up work, by for example, funding projects aimed at improving childcare and training facilities in rural parts of Scotland. The particular difficulties in delivering childcare and other programmes affecting women in rural areas, where the low population density can make it difficult to achieve a "critical mass" to set up provision, are being addressed. A Rural Issues Sub-Group exists to ensure the New Deal takes full account of the rural situation.

348. The Scottish Office published the findings of a study *Car Dependence in Rural Scotland* in June 1998. It found that 89% of households in rural Scotland have a car, and cars were used for 76.5% of all journeys. Although there were no differences in the number of journeys, men make a higher proportion of their journeys by car, and their car journeys are significantly longer than those of women. The study found that for those in

more remote households, running a car was more of a necessity, even for the lowest income groups. Following the Budget in March 1998, similar arrangements for rural transport in Scotland have been made to those described for England. A Rural Transport Funding Package provides £13.5 million over 3 years to improve transport links in rural Scotland. Of this, £10.5 million is being used for subsidising public transport services, mainly to provide new and additional bus services; £1.8 million is being used for community transport projects, under a programme administered by the Community Transport Association; and £1.2 million is being used to help rural petrol stations so as to retain a vital network of petrol stations in remote areas.

Wales

349. The Rural Partnership for Wales — an advisory body which brings together representatives of the National Assembly, Welsh Development Agency, Welsh Local Government Association, the Farming Unions and other key stakeholders including Chwarae Teg and the Welsh Language Board — makes a key contribution to the development of rural programmes and policies in Wales. In identifying policy and practice capable of delivering substantial benefits to rural Wales, as well as informing the preparation of a new rural agenda for Wales for consideration by the National Assembly, the Partnership ensures that equal opportunities are an integral part of its work. In addition, recently launched initiatives such as Rural Community Action, measures to assist the promotion and adaptation of rural Wales under the Rural Development Plan and the LEADER+ Programme all have equal opportunities as a key cross-cutting theme. This principal also applies to initiatives such as Farming Connect, which contains specific measures to assist women in farming families and to all the agricultural and rural schemes operated by the National Assembly.

The Environment

350. The UK's environment policy is addressed as part of the broader concept of sustainable development, so that environmental considerations are integrated into all areas of policy (including transport, energy and agriculture). The Government recognises the critical role women play in environmental decision-making and seeks to integrate specific gender needs in the planning of settlements, buildings, transport infrastructure and services (e.g. in terms of personal safety and access to affordable housing). For instance, the Government continues to consult women's groups on a range of environmental policies. Women's groups are well represented on Government advisory bodies such as the Sustainable Development Commission, the National Consumer Council and the Local Agenda 21 Steering Group, but the Government continues to look to improve its performance in involving women in all aspects of environmental decision-making.

ARTICLE 15: EQUALITY BEFORE THE LAW AND IN CIVIL MATTERS

Judicial Appointments

351. The Lord Chancellor[21] has repeatedly stressed that discrimination has no place in the judicial appointments process. His policy is to appoint to each judicial post in England and Wales the candidate who appears to be the best qualified regardless of gender, ethnic origin, marital status, sexual orientation, political affiliation, religion or disability. In addition to appointments made on merit, the Lord Chancellor's guiding principles are that candidates who are interested in becoming judges should apply for appointment; that the appointments process must be founded on real equality of opportunity; and that everyone should have access to information about the qualities and skills sought in a potential judge. To encourage more women to apply for judicial appointments, and to help the progress of successful candidates, the Lord Chancellor has introduced the following initiatives:

[21] As part of the continuing drive to modernise the constitution and public services, the Prime Minister announced on 12 June 2003 the creation of a new Department for Constitutional Affairs. This incorporates most of the responsibilities of the former Lord Chancellor's Department. The Scotland and Wales Offices continue to exist under the umbrella of the Department for Constitutional Affairs, but report to the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales respectively.

- The creation of a Commission for Judicial Appointments to: conduct an ongoing audit of the judicial appointments and Queen's Counsel procedures; handle complaints from individuals and organisations about the application of those procedures; and to make recommendations to the Lord Chancellor for improvements to the process.
- A Pilot One-day Assessment Centre, held during October and November 2002, where applicants were given a variety of opportunities to demonstrate their suitability for the job by participating in various exercises appropriate to the post applied for. The criteria for appointments are kept under constant review and a competency framework was developed for use with the Assessment Centre Pilot.
- Officials from the Department for Constitutional Affairs (DCA) carry out a constructive dialogue with the legal profession on diversity and equal opportunity issues. Ministers and officials have attended conferences throughout England and Wales providing information, and they have worked closely with the profession through the Joint Working Party on Equal Opportunities in Judicial Appointments and Silk. DCA officials are also on the organising committees for the Minority Lawyers' Conference and the Women Lawyer Forum.
- DCA has produced a video entitled "*All Rise*", about the procedures for applying for part-time appointments.
- All judicial posts up to and including the High Court Bench, with the exception of Deputy High Court Judge, are advertised.
- Lay Members are used in the selection process including the interviews themselves.
- A Work-shadowing scheme has been set up whereby barristers and solicitors who may be interested in applying to be a Recorder or Deputy District Judge can shadow a judge for up to 5 days and learn what it would be like to sit in a judicial capacity.
- The Lord Chancellor has approved the appointment of a permanent part-time District Judge (because of her responsibilities as a carer) and, following a successful pilot scheme, has extended the facility to future competitions for appointments to certain other judicial posts
- It is possible for those who have had a career break for family reasons to apply to undertake their sittings as Recorders in concentrated blocks rather than being spread over a number of years.
- Candidates for the most recent Recorder competition were allowed to submit a statement setting out the factors they believed may have restricted their career opportunities. This has now been extended to cover all other part-time judicial appointments.
- A booklet about equality and diversity in judicial appointments was published in May 2002 and is available on the DCA website (www.dca.gov.uk).

352. Since October 1999 a Judicial Appointments Annual Report has been published giving details of the changes the Lord Chancellor has made and plans that are intended for the judicial appointments procedures. In April 2002 the Lord Chancellor abolished most of the age limits specified in defining the field of eligibility for judicial appointments. This has removed unnecessary restrictions and now allows those professional groups where females and males are equally matched, and where female and ethnic minority lawyers are better represented, to apply for a judicial appointment earlier in their career. Information about appointments procedures and the criteria for applying is available on the DCA website. The number of women judges is, at least in part, a reflection of the number of women in the legal profession with the appropriate years of experience. Judges are appointed from among relatively senior lawyers. The number of women with the appropriate seniority for appointment is growing as more women enter the legal profession and the number of women in the judiciary continues to show a steady increase, as shown in the higher percentage of women in the part-time ranks of the judiciary than at the full-time level.

353. In 2001-02, of the main appointments through open competition 34.4% were women. This represents an increase from 1998-99, when women represented 23.5% of the main appointments. The average length of legal experience of those appointed to the main competitions in 2001-02 was just over 22 years. From information supplied by the Bar Council and the Law Society, the proportion of female barristers with over 20 years experience for the same period was 13.2%, and the proportion of female solicitors was 12.0%. It is the Lord Chancellor's policy not to set targets for increasing the diversity of the judiciary, but he has published

projections of the proportion of women who may come through the appointments process successfully over the next five and ten years. These projections, first published in October 2001, show that the percentage of women appointed from the Deputy District Judge competition in 2005 may be 38% and in 2010 the figure may rise to 42%. For the District Judge competitions in 2005 and 2010 the figures are estimated to be 38% and 45% respectively. Figures for the Recorder and Circuit Judge competitions are lower – women may account for 20% of appointments for both competitions in 2005 and for 24% and 25% respectively in 2010.

354. The Lord Chancellor supports the action taken by the Bar Council and the Law Society to promote equal opportunities within the profession and his officials are involved in a joint working group on equal opportunities in judicial appointments, which comprises members of both branches of the profession. The Lord Advocate follows a similar policy in Scotland. The legal profession in Scotland is encouraging more women advocates and solicitors to make themselves available for judicial appointments. In addition, women play a key role as lay magistrates in England and Wales and in Northern Ireland. Lay magistrates are men and women without legal qualification who sit in a judicial capacity in local courts on a part-time voluntary basis. In England and Wales women accounted for 43% of lay magistrates in 1989, rising to 46% in 1993, 48% in 1998, and 49.1% in 2001. See table 15.1 in annex 2 (article 15, p. 16).

355. Judicial Training is the responsibility of the Judicial Studies Board (JSB) — an independent-non departmental public body. All newly appointed part-time judges, and all judges who are authorised to hear family cases, are required to attend a residential Induction course in the relevant jurisdiction. Thereafter, both full- and part-time judges attend residential continuation seminars every 3 years in each jurisdiction they exercise. Modules on Domestic Violence are included in both Induction and Continuation Training in Criminal, Civil and Family Law, with a view to ensuring they are given the same attention and consideration as other cases. Many judges also attend locally organised conferences. In addition, all full and part-time judges sitting in the Crown Court attend an annual one-day Circuit Seminar on sentencing issues, for which the theme in 2001-02 was Domestic Violence. This provided, on average, up to 5 hours of additional training on this subject in 2000-01.

Legal Aid

356. English Law provides assistance in the form of publicly funded legal services through the Community Legal Service and the Criminal Defence Service to people who wish to pursue legal remedies before the courts. In civil cases, the conditions for granting legal help or advice under the Access to Justice Act 1999 are that a person's income and capital should fall within certain prescribed limits and that the merits of the case justify legal aid to be granted. In criminal cases, the only test is whether it is in the interests of justice for legal aid to be granted. Women are just as eligible as men for legal aid, providing the prescribed conditions are fulfilled. In the calendar year 2001, of the legal aid certificates granting funding in family proceedings, nearly twice as many certificates were granted to women as to men. Of the certificates issued in this area, the majority of women were plaintiffs and the men, respondents (see table 15.2 in annex 2, p. 16).

Support for court users

357. The Courts and Tribunals Modernisation Programme (CTMP) is aimed at providing a better service for all users of the courts. Initiatives being taken forward within both the civil and criminal jurisdictions should increase access to justice and improve the court experience for women. One such project in the criminal courts is the *Vulnerable and Intimidated Witness Project* (VIW), initiated by the Home Office. This project is now providing a better environment for giving evidence by vulnerable and intimidated witnesses, who are often women. The Department for Constitutional Affairs (formerly the Lord Chancellor's Department) and the Court Service have worked with the Home Office to ensure that the courts have the facilities, equipment and training to make the project a success. The project includes: live TV links for witnesses to give evidence; a video recording of evidence in chief; screens around the witness box; pagers for witnesses. All Crown Court centres and widely used satellite courts now have TV link equipment. In total, 190 of the 497 courtrooms in the Crown Court have been equipped. It is hoped to extend the provision of VIW equipment to 45% of Crown Court

courtrooms during 2002-03. The first integrated, purpose-built witness suite was set up in the Crown Court at Manchester Crown Square. The dedicated suite — a flagship for the Court Service — has its own separate entrance and reception area, and seven TV link studios. A similar facility has now been provided at Durham and a third is being developed at the Central Criminal Court. Liverpool and Inner London Crown Court centres have also bid for witness suites. The priorities currently for providing additional VIW equipment and witness rooms are the central Criminal Court and the Street Crime Courts. If funding allows, equipment will be supplied to a further 16 courts and the Criminal Appeal Office.

358. Within the civil and family jurisdictions the Modernising the Civil and Family Courts Report published in May 2002 has at its heart the aim to improve the services provided to court users, whilst delivering those services in ways which are more convenient to Court Service customers. In addition, there is a commitment to increase the number of places where hearings can take place. A recent survey found that women were more likely than men to find the Small Claims Court process intimidating. Various projects within CTMP address this issue directly. For example, Money Claim Online is a web-based service available from the Court Service Website. Subject to certain conditions, it provides the facility to issue claims for fixed amounts up to £100,000. Claimants can issue and check the progress of their claim on line, enter judgment and apply for a warrant of execution over the Internet. Defendants can submit an acknowledgement of service, defence, part admission or counterclaim online. There is an on-line guide for court users about the small claims process, including information on alternatives to coming to court, pre-court action information and general help. The ability to make and defend a claim on-line without the need to attend court can make the initial stages of claiming and defending less intimidating.

359. New IT systems are being developed which will not only reduce delays but could be used to improve the information provided to victims and witnesses and to provide video links for hearings, thereby relieving the pressure of having to attend court. The Court Service is developing a *Partnership* project with advice agencies, which may include providing them with electronic links to the proposed business centres, hearing centres and the claimant. This would give advisers immediate access to a range of debt relief options without leaving their offices, and enable them to advise the debtor and ensure that action is taken at the point of advice. Links between the parties could be established more quickly thereby increasing the possibility of early settlement, possibly without the need for a hearing.

360. In Northern Ireland, since the previous report the percentage of women in the judiciary has increased from 7% to 14% (12% for fulltime appointments). There are 2 female County Court Judges, 2 female District Judges and 2 female Resident Magistrates. There are 878 Justices of the Peace in Northern Ireland of whom 24% are women. Of the 143 Lay Panel members of the juvenile court 52% are women.

361. In Scotland there are 3 female judges in the Supreme Courts, 21 female Sheriffs (permanent) and 3 female Sheriffs (part-time). There are 1,512 women panel members of Children Hearings, which represents 59% of all panel members. Of the Children's Panel Advisory Committee (CPAC) 91 are female which represents 52% of all CPAC members.

ARTICLE 16: EQUALITY IN MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

Divorce Law

362. On 16 January 2001 the Lord Chancellor announced that the Government intends to invite Parliament to repeal Part II of the *Family Law Act 1996* when a suitable legislative opportunity occurs. The Lord Chancellor indicated that, in the light of the findings from the *Final Evaluation Report* into information meetings required as the first stage of the divorce or separation process, he did not believe Part II would fulfil the Government's policy objectives of saving saveable marriages and, where marriages do break down, bringing them to an end with the minimum distress to the parties and children affected. The Government will invite Parliament to repeal the relevant sections of the *Family Law Act* once a suitable legislative opportunity occurs.

363. The *Divorce (Religious Marriages) Act 2002* came into force on 24 February 2003. The Act addresses the problem experienced by some Jewish ex-wives who are unable to remarry in a religious ceremony where a religious divorce — a *get* — has not been delivered after the granting of a civil divorce.

Parental Rights and Responsibilities

364. Unmarried fathers who do not have or acquire parental responsibility may still bring some applications under the *Children Act 1989* although in some instances the leave of the court is required. A change in the law so that unmarried fathers who sign the birth certificate jointly with the mother will automatically have parental responsibility is included in the *Adoption and Children Act 2002* (which received Royal Assent on 7 November 2002). A date for commencement is awaited. The Act extends to England and Wales but provides for the recognition of parental responsibility obtained by joint registration in Scotland and Northern Ireland to be recognised in England and Wales should this be the intention of those jurisdictions.

Violence against women

365. Stopping violence against women in all its forms (including domestic and sexual violence) and bringing perpetrators to justice is a priority for the Government. It is a complex social problem that causes poverty, ill health, social exclusion and loss of life. Domestic Violence accounts for almost a quarter (23%) of all violent crime. Roughly one in four women will experience domestic violence in their lifetime (British Crime Survey, 2000). Women are twice as likely as men to experience domestic violence from a partner and 37% of female homicide victims were killed by their former or current partner (Criminal Statistics, 1999). The Government recognises that preventing and eliminating this crime requires a unified and multifaceted national approach, including active joined-up working across all Government departments to deliver co-ordinated policy action on this important issue. In this context, the Government established a Ministerial Working Group, in 2001, to ensure concerted and co-ordinated action at the highest level. The group is also working to strengthen the Government's multifaceted and integrated approach tc tacking violence against women, in particular domestic violence, including legal, educational, financial and social components, in particular support for victims. The aim of the Group is to increase safe choices for women and children, whether inside or outside the home; hold all those responsible accountable for perpetrating this crime; develop effective interventions to prevent repeat attacks; and challenge the 'just a domestic' culture and ensure that this crime is no longer excused, tolerated or ignored. The group brings together Ministers from all major departments who are concentrating on developing joined up policy on 5 key areas of action, chosen for their capacity to effect most tangible change on this issue. The five areas for action are: (i) early and effective healthcare intervention; (ii) increasing safe accommodation choices for women and children; (iii) improving the interface between civil and criminal law jurisdictions; (iv) awareness raising and education; and (v) appropriate and consistent response from the police and Crown Prosecution Service.

366. The Women and Equality Unit with cross cutting responsibility in Government works in partnership with the Home Office to ensure effective joined up working in Government on this issue. The Ministers for Women have been charged with responsibility by the Ministerial Group to take forward the Government's work on awareness raising and education. A strategy is being developed with two overarching aims to reach more women and children and raise awareness of options for safety and protection; and to reduce social tolerance of the crime so that it is no longer excused, tolerated or ignored. The Ministers for Women have also launched research into the economic and social costs of domestic violence. The research aims to describe the current position in the UK in terms of the availability and quality of data; develop a methodology to estimate the economic and social costs in the UK and employ the proposed methodology to estimate costs borne by service providers, employers and women and their families.

367. The Women and Equality Unit has been working in collaboration with other government departments, statutory agencies, NGOs and the voluntary sector on ways to prevent violence against women, and provide protection, provision of services and justice for women where violence has occurred. The Unit continues to consult a wide spectrum of NGOs and academic experts in the field of violence against women, thereby

facilitating the greater involvement of the NGO sector in this area of Government policy. The Unit is working in partnership with the European Commission and other EU Member States to take forward the work on violence against women, reinforcing its holistic and multi-disciplinary approach.

368. In 2002, the Home Office published and invited comments on a Criminal Justice White Paper. This paper sets out a range of possible measures: extending the use of restraining orders; anonymity for victims in court; making breach of a non-molestation order a criminal offence; better liaison between the civil and criminal courts; and domestic violence murder reviews. The Government published a consultation paper in June 2003, setting out proposals on preventing domestic violence. The consultation aims to generate a comprehensive response from the public, voluntary sectors and others, to ensure the widest possible agreement on what needs to be done to prevent and deal with domestic violence. This consultation consolidates the initial consultation on domestic violence in the white paper and the ongoing work of the Ministerial Group on Domestic Violence. The proposals cover three broad aims: 1. Ensuring the safety of domestic violence victims; 2. Bringing offenders to justice; and 3. Strengthening confidence in the criminal justice system. A draft Bill on domestic violence will be published later in the year.

369. Other significant developments made since 1999 include the publication *Living without fear: an integrated approach to tackling violence against women* (1999), setting out a unified and multi-faceted national strategy, promoting an integrated and multi-agency approach with the aim to provide timely support and protection to women and children, bring perpetrators to justice and prevent violence against women. *Living without Fear* promulgated good practice in order to achieve effective multi-agency strategies across the national territory.

370. The *1998 Crime and Disorder Act* placed a statutory requirement on local authorities to effectively monitor the level of domestic violence in their community and form partnerships to reduce the problem. In 2000, the Home Office published guidance on multi-agency working, *Domestic Violence – Break the Chain: multi agency guidance for addressing domestic violence.* The Government has also produced a leaflet entitled *Loves Me Not* (previously *Breaking the Chain*) that provides help and advice for domestic violence survivors. The leaflet, updated in 2002, focuses on helping survivors to recognise domestic violence and suggesting what action they can take to protect themselves and contact help agencies. In 1999, the Home Office commissioned a major review of current knowledge and services on domestic violence and rape and sexual assault. Findings, published in 2000, formed the basis of a £10.7 million funding for the development and evaluation of projects addressing domestic violence, rape and sexual assault. A further £137 million has been made available under the *Safer Communities Fund* that identifies safe housing and support services for women and children fleeing domestic violence as a priority.

371. Between 1999 and 2003, a range of Government departments have commissioned research, produced circulars and made policy recommendations on violence against women. Through special grant programmes, core and project funding has also been made available to major agencies in the sector. Major progress has also been made on improving civil and criminal law interventions. This has included the introduction of pro-arrest policies across all police forces and the issuing of revised guidance to state prosecutors. Other work has included the proposed inclusion of domestic violence as a child protection issue in primary legislation. The Government recognises and values the important work of women's refuges. One of the Government's key priorities for the new Ministerial Group is increasing safe accommodation choices for women and children. The *Supporting People Programme*, is the new system of planning, monitoring and funding for housing-related support services in England will form an integral part of delivering this aim, helping domestic violence survivors to live more independent lives in the community. Revenue funding of £153 million is being provided to ensure the effective implementation of this programme and in the run up to implementation £120 million additional capital funding was made available to increase provision for specified vulnerable groups that included women fleeing domestic violence. In February 2003, the Government announced a £14 million cash boost to help tackle domestic violence. This three-year funding package will help the 376 Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships across the country develop practical strategies for dealing with domestic violence at a local level.

372. The Government announced an amendment to the *Adoption and Children Bill* that will extend the definition of harm in the *Children Act*. The amendment will make clear that harm includes any harm a child may suffer or is at risk of suffering as a result of witnessing the ill-treatment of another person.

373. In 2002-03, a series of fact finding and awareness raising visits were undertaken, by the Government, to hear more about the experiences of women and the experiences of frontline providers. Two of the visits were in specialist minority ethnic projects. The first one, on 11th of July 2002, was in Derby at the Hadhari Nari Project, which was established in 1986 as a Black Women's Group to cater for the housing and social needs of all Black women. The project is also the main specialist Women's Aid group serving the needs of Black, Asian and other ethnic minority women. The second, an awareness raising and information gathering visit to Newham Asian Women's Project Resource Centre in Plaistow on 20th January 2003. Newham Asian Women's Project (NAWP) co-ordinates a range of holistic support services for Asian women and children. Imkaan is a national second-tier research and policy group, which is currently managed by NAWP.

374. In partnership with the Housing Corporation for Registered Social Landlords, the Government will provide £18.9 million provide 273 units of accommodation in all regions of England for these most vulnerable women and their families. In addition to this, we are committing a further £7 million in each of the following two financial years to fund refuge provision. This is a fantastic new development and the substantial funding package will make a huge difference to the ease with which women can find a place of safety when they most need it. In particular, it will provide a stepping stone to a new home and a safer future for hundreds, if not thousands, of women.

375. Maternity care is an important area of the health service for combating domestic violence. Thirty percent of domestic violence starts in pregnancy and existing levels of violence can often escalate. The Government has therefore recently commissioned programme funding to pilot routine antenatal questioning for domestic violence. The pilot project is being undertaken by the University of the West of England and North Bristol NHS Trust. The project will look critically at (i) levels of domestic violence identified before and after the introduction of routine questioning in the antenatal period; (ii) outcomes for both clients and practitioners across a range of issues associated with introduction of the screening tool; and (iii) education and support mechanisms for health professionals to enable them to implement and maintain effective screening programmes and work across inter-agency boundaries to support survivors of domestic violence. Outcomes of the Bristol pilot will be fully evaluated and available by the end of 2003. Through membership of the project steering group, the Department of Health will look closely at emerging findings from the Bristol experience and consider national rollout as part of the maternity element of the Children's National Service Framework. In the longer term, the maternity model could provide opportunities to extend routine questioning to other areas of the NHS.

Forced Marriages

376. As part of the Government's ongoing commitment to tackle the issue of forced marriages, the Government is developing best practice guidelines for Social Services to help identify the key issues they face in dealing with victims or potential victims of forced marriages. To launch the initiative, a three-day conference was organised by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office for social workers, non-governmental organisations and community groups. The conference aimed to raise awareness of forced marriages; identify key contacts to work with over the next year in developing guidelines; and drawing up key issues to be included in the guidelines.

Female Genital Mutilation

377. The *Prohibition of Female Circumcision Act 1985* makes it an offence (punishable up to 5 years imprisonment, an unlimited fine or both) to carry out the procedure known as female circumcision. The Government regards the genital mutilation of any girl or female infant as unacceptable, regardless of their ethnic origin. The Government is currently considering whether the law should be strengthened to make it an offence to take girls abroad for genital mutilation even where this is lawful in the country where it occurs.

Under the *Female Genital Mutilation Bill*, a Private Members Bill introduced by Ann Clwyd MP on 11 December 2002, will, if it becomes law, restate and extend the provisions of the 1985 Act and give them extra-territorial effect. See article 12 for more information on Government action on this issue.

Crime Reduction Programme Violence against Women Initiative

378. The *Reducing Violence against Women Initiative* is part of the national *Crime Reduction Programme* (CRP) — an evidence-led initiative that aims to identify the most effective, and cost effective approaches to reducing domestic violence, rape and sexual assault by known perpetrators, and to disseminate good practice. 30 multi-agency projects were commissioned in July 2000, and these are being independently evaluated to assess their effectiveness and impact. In March 2001, an additional 24 projects were commissioned. The projects are victim-focused and provide information, advice and support to empower survivors to report incidents to the police and to other agencies, as well as enabling them to make informed decisions. The findings and lessons from the initiative will be made available in 2003.

Criminal justice procedures to deal with domestic violence

379. The review and conduct of criminal proceedings in England and Wales is the responsibility of the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS). In November 2001, following extensive and unprecedented consultation with the voluntary sector, the CPS issued a revised policy on prosecuting cases of domestic violence. The new policy focuses particularly on: victims' priorities (safety, support and information); greater co-ordination between criminal proceedings and civil proceedings; and constructing cases, wherever possible, on the basis of evidence other than that of the victim.

380. To support the launch of the new policy in November 2001, a new national Network of CPS Domestic Violence Co-ordinators was set up. The CPS is divided into 42 areas across England and Wales. Each of those areas has several prosecutors who are particularly experienced in prosecuting domestic violence cases. Now each area also has a Network Co-ordinating prosecutor who can share good practice with or identify problems and ask for help from their Network colleagues across England and Wales. They play an active role in inter-agency domestic violence fora and their contact numbers can be given to external partners (such as the voluntary sector) for effective and consistent local delivery of national prosecuting policy. The Network held its first Conference in June 2002. Since 24 July 2002, special measures such as TV links/screens have been available to assist some vulnerable or intimidated witnesses give evidence in court. (*Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999*). The Government intends to introduce further legislation in 2002 to help tackle domestic violence and hold abusers accountable for their actions.

Rape and Sexual Assault

381. The Government launched a research study on *Rape and Sexual Assault of women: findings from the British Crime Survey*. The study demonstrates that sexual assault is part of the wider problem of domestic violence that is already a Government priority. The study findings showed that numbers of sexual victimisation were higher than the levels of reporting; in particular, rape is one of the most under-reported crimes[22]. (See table 16.2, annex 2, p. 18). In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the number of rapes reported. Police and Government action to support the victims of sexual assaults is likely to have increased the number being brought to the attention of the police, and therefore recorded by them. Recognising that the levels of conviction for rape are low, the Government is intensifying its efforts to tackle this problem. Specifically, the Government set out an action plan for tackling the low reporting and conviction rates for rape. The Government has put in place a range of initiatives designed to address the criminal and civil law interface and monitor the effectiveness of intervention measures.

[22] Home Office Research, Development and Statistics Directorate. March 2002.

382. In response to this report, the Government published an action plan in July 2002, which details practical measures at every stage of the criminal justice process. The overarching aim of the plan is to improve the conviction rates for rape by (i) improving the investigation of rape cases; (ii) enhancing the quality of advice, decision making, case preparation and presentation at court; and (iii) bettering the treatment of victims and witnesses in cases involving allegations of rape. Specific measures to achieve this include:

- A review of existing facilities for victim examination across all police forces.
- The launch of a 'first response' kit for police officers to prevent the loss of vital forensic evidence in cases of rape.
- A review of training for police officers who deal with rape victims.
- Revisiting the criteria for classification of offences.
- The development of a network of specialist rape prosecutors throughout the country.
- A review of the training for prosecutors on cases involving rape and sexual offences.
- A commitment that a second opinion will be sought from a specialist Crown Prosecution Service prosecutor on all decisions to drop a rape case or reduce charges.
- Early legal advice from the Crown Prosecution Service to ensure the correct charge is made from the beginning of a case involving rape allegations.
- The development of new CPS guidance on the prosecution of rape, with advice on how to proceed when statements are retracted.
- Measures to ensure that the lessons of cases are learnt through reviews by the police and CPS following acquittal.
- The development of protocols between the police and CPS for submission of advice files in rape cases.
- Updated guidance and instructions to Chief Crown Prosecutors and police officers regarding good practice in relation to procedure and victim care.

383. Through these improvements, the Government wants to give victims of rape more confidence in the criminal justice system and encourage them to report offences of rape. It is also important to send a strong message to perpetrators that this crime will not be tolerated and the law will be enforced. In order to ensure that the action plan is translated into changes which will be of real benefit to the victims of this repulsive crime, an inter-agency working group is now monitoring progress against the plan. In April 2002, the Chief Inspectors of Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary published a joint report *Joint Inspection into the Investigation and Prosecution of Cases Involving Allegations of Rape*. The Review analysed and assessed the quality of investigation, decision-making and prosecution by police and the CPS, in cases involving allegations of rape. The Inspectors made a number of recommendations and suggestions as well as identifying good practice.

Trafficking in women

384. The Home Secretary has indicated in a White Paper, that he intends to use the Asylum Bill to strengthen the law by introducing a new offence on trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation to carry a maximum penalty of 14 years and also a new offence on trafficking for labour exploitation. The Government is committed to doing this within two years of the adoption of the EU Framework Decision on trafficking in human beings. See article 6 for further information.

Northern Ireland

Violence against Women

385. The Northern Ireland Office is currently co-ordinating, on behalf of the Northern Ireland Departments, the development of a strategy to tackle violence against women in Northern Ireland. The strategy will look at a range of crimes where women are predominantly the victims including domestic violence. Sexual crime and

fear of crime will also be dealt with under the strategy. The tackling violence against women strategy will focus on improved prevention, protection and provision of service to women.

Legislation

386. *The Family Homes and Domestic Violence (Northern Ireland) Order 1998* highlights the importance of dealing with domestic violence in Northern Ireland. Its remedies are available to a wide category of applicants and breach of the orders made under the legislation is an arrestable offence The Order also makes provisions in relation to child contact where there is domestic violence in the family. The Government intends to legislate to address three anomalous areas of family law that treat men and women differently, namely the common law rule of maintenance, the rule in relation to housekeeping monies and the presumption of advancement.

Criminal Justice

387. Over recent years in Northern Ireland there have been a number of initiatives introduced into the various agencies that make up the criminal justice system. As a result of the Criminal Justice Review, the *Criminal Evidence (Northern Ireland) Order 1999* was introduced which provides special measures in trials involving vulnerable or intimidated witnesses. The definitions of such witnesses are drafted in a way as to include those who are vulnerable either because of the offence, or because of a relationship with a defendant, thus covering victims in domestic violence cases. The order has not yet commenced as the necessary Court Rules are yet to be produced, but it is expected that the commencement orders will be made in 2003.

388. The Northern Ireland Court Service (NICtS) has introduced special arrangement at all Crown Court venues and most venues and most Magistrates Courts to allow women who are attending court as either victims or witnesses to have access to separate and secure waiting facilities. The NICtS is committed through its accommodation strategy to improving the standards of facilities available at all courts. Women using courts are being consulted, through court user groups, to try and identify the assistance and information they need to reduce fear and anxiety that is often associated with court attendance. The NICtS has dealt with 4689 interim and full applications for Non – Molestation Orders during 2001. A number of joint orders (non–molestation and occupation) were also dealt with.

389. All staff from the Probation Board Northern Ireland (PBNI) receive training on domestic violence. PBNI also run Perpetrator Programmes in 3 areas of Northern Ireland. The programmes are delivered in partnership with Social Services and contain adjudicated offenders and offenders who have not been convicted of domestic violence but where this has been highlighted as an issue.

390. All the Criminal Justice Agencies are represented on the Regional Domestic Violence Forum Criminal Justice Sub-Group.

391. The Northern Ireland Police Service (PSNI) currently has 35 officers employed in the role of domestic violence officer. These officers receive initial training in domestic violence followed by a further accredited certificate course from the University of Teeside in Professional Policing (Domestic Violence). However, a review into the role of the Domestic Violence Officers is underway. This review is to examine the possibility of making these officers investigate and will make recommendations about how to improve services offered to victims of domestic violence, especially those who are repeat victims. The PSNI are also reviewing their information recording system and will introduce a new Domestic Incident Report Form on the Integrated Crime Information Systems (ICIS) in the Autumn of 2003. This will provide an accessible database providing relevant information including previous incidents for operations police officers who are often required to take a decisive action at the scene of a domestic incident. All new recruits to the PSNI receive training in domestic violence including training from domestic violence officers and external organisations.

392. With the aim to ensure effective accounting of domestic violence cases, the Police in Northern Ireland introduced a new method of recording the number of domestic violence cases, in 1997. Indeed, before the

introduction of the new system, many domestic violence cases were lost from the police statistics as domestic violence is prosecuted under a number of different offences from assault to criminal damage and it was difficult to distinguish domestic violence cases. Consequently, under the new system, the number of domestic violence registered increased from around 8500 in 1997 to 14000 in 1998. The Government believes that this is a result of the more effective accounting method rather than an increase in the number of domestic violence cases in real terms as there are no available statistics to demonstrate that women in Northern Ireland are particularly affected by violence.

Support for victims of Domestic Violence

393. In Northern Ireland, the *Family Homes and Domestic Violence (NI) Order* was implemented in March 1999. Its provisions are currently being reviewed to ascertain whether there are any areas that need to be improved to assist users of the legislation. This review has involved input from the major stakeholders in Northern Ireland, and results are anticipated in 2003.

394. The *Regional Forum on Domestic Violence* is an inter-departmental group established in response to a research project commissioned by the Department of Health and Social Services in 1992. In 1995 the group published a joint policy document, *Tackling Domestic Violence – A policy for Northern Ireland* which identified 4 main priorities to be addressed in tackling domestic violence: to raise public awareness of domestic violence as a serious problem; to challenge seriously the attitudes and behaviour of those who perpetrate or condone it; to improve support and treatment services of all survivors; and to build a clearer picture of the nature and extent of domestic violence. The Forum's achievements to date include the establishment of local inter-agency networks; the development of training and information programmes; a pilot scheme for cautioning first time offenders; a treatment programme for perpetrators; and a public awareness campaign. A review of the role and remit of the Forum has recently concluded and a new Mission Statement has been formulated to, 'work together, and with others, to reduce domestic violence and its effects on family life and society.' Two additional priorities were identified and agreed: to achieve a multi-agency / integrated response to domestic violence; and to review the adequacy of current and influence future legislation. The first meeting of the new Forum was held in February and included representatives from 3 Government Departments, local Health and Social Services Boards, the Police Service of Northern Ireland, the Probation Board Northern Ireland, the Lord Chief Justice's Office and 2 organisations from the voluntary sector.

Marriage and Family Relations

395. In Northern Ireland registered housing associations provide all social housing including housing for people with special needs and victims of domestic violence. Day-to-day management is carried out by voluntary organisations such as the Northern Ireland Women's Aid Federation (NIWAF). By March 2002, associations had provided 28 refuges for vulnerable women (with or without children) totalling 502 places. A further 2 refuges with 20 places are planned during the next three years.

Scotland

Family Law Act 1996

396. The Scottish Executive White Paper *Parents and Children* was issued in September 2000 following the 1999 consultation paper *Improving Scottish Family Law*. The White Paper proposes to: reduce the periods of separation constituting grounds for divorce to discourage acrimony in proceedings; improve the protection of present and former partners against domestic abuse; give rights to cohabitants to make a financial claim on the cessation of the cohabitation either by separation or the death of the other cohabitant; enable step-parents to obtain parental responsibilities and rights (PRRs) by registering an agreement jointly with others already having PRRs; and to encourage the involvement of unmarried fathers with their families, by giving parental responsibilities and rights to fathers who in future register the birth of a child jointly with the mother. This will not apply retrospectively to allow some protection for the mother and her family from potentially violent

partners. A draft bill is expected during the course of the next parliament, subject to the views of incoming Ministers.

Violence against women

397. *Preventing Violence Against Women: Action Across the Scottish Executive* was published in October 2001. It takes account of comments received on the Action Plan published for consultation in 1998 and provides comprehensive information about violence against women and how it is being tackled. The Scottish Partnership on Domestic Abuse, established in 1998 with a remit to recommend minimum standards and levels of service for women experiencing domestic abuse, reported to Scottish Ministers in November 2000 and produced a *National Strategy to Address Domestic Abuse in Scotland*. The Scottish Executive is committed to implementing the National Strategy and has established a National Group to Address Domestic Abuse in Scotland with a remit to:

- Oversee the implementation of the National Strategy;
- Identify and disseminate good practice;
- Identify key issues and develop a common national response
- Provide advice in relation to monitoring data and the identification of the research required;
- Establish and oversee a structure of specific issue-based groups and local multi-agency groups working with a coherent framework,
- Review and monitor progress against the Action Plan;
- Consider links between domestic abuse and the wider issues of violence against women.

398. The National Group is composed of key experts from the areas of the police, education, health, local government, racial equality, the law and the voluntary sector and is chaired by the Minister for Social Justice. The National Group has so far set up four working groups to look at the provision of refuge, review current legislation, develop a prevention strategy and develop a training strategy.

The Refuge Development Programme

399. The Scottish Executive will provide £10 million through the Communities Scotland budget to build or purchase new refuges or to adapt, extend and upgrade existing ones over three years from April 2001. Local authorities were invited to bid for capital housing projects to be developed by Registered Social Landlords in conjunction with women's aid. Ten projects began in 2001-02 and three projects in 2002-03. For the final year of the programme 16 projects in 14 local authority areas were given approval in December to begin in 2003.

The Domestic Abuse Service Development Fund

400. The Domestic Abuse Service Development Fund started in April 2000. Initially for two years but extended to 2004, the Fund provides £3 million a year (£1.5 million from the Executive and £1.5 million matched funding) for projects that carry forward the work in the National Strategy at local level. Fifty-seven projects are currently being supported.

Public Awareness Raising

401. Progress continues to be made in raising awareness in Scotland, The Executive's "Behind Closed Doors" domestic abuse campaign continued during 2001/2002 using TV adverts, print adverts, an 8 page supplement distributed with the Daily Record on 26 December 2001, adverts on outdoor sites and in female washrooms in public places and beermats in 450 pubs in Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen. In addition, the domestic abuse website was improved and re-launched. A new television advertisement was launched on 26 December 2002. "Dolls House" makes it clear how domestic abuse affects children. The advertisements carry a

helpline number, which is open between 10 am and 10 pm seven days a week. The line is sponsored by Thus PLC and managed by North Ayrshire Women's Aid.

Scottish Strategy for Victims

402. The *Scottish Strategy for Victims*, which was published in January 2001, aims to put all victims at the heart of the criminal justice system. It seeks to ensure better support, information and participation for all victims of crime, including women. Work already undertaken includes:

- The publication of Action Plans by all agencies within the Scottish Criminal Justice system to implement the objectives in the *Scottish Strategy for Victims*;
- The publication of a victim information leaflet in October 2001;
- Scottish Victims of Crime website launched on 19 August 2002;
- The establishment, in 2002, of a Witness Service in all 49 Sheriff Courts. This service will be rolled out to High Courts in 2003;
- The roll out of a Victim Information and Advice (VIA) service as part of the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service, to provide case-specific information to witnesses and victims. Six out of eleven Procurator Fiscal areas now have a VIA office and the roll out will be completed in 2003;
- The publication of a Progress Report against the objectives in the *Scottish Strategy for Victims* in February 2003.

403. In addition, the Scottish Executive published a consultation document in May 2002 on the needs of vulnerable witnesses; and the *Sexual Offences (Procedure and Evidence) (Scotland) Act 2002* prohibits an accused from personally questioning the complainer in sexual offence cases and requires an accused in such cases to be legally represented throughout the whole trial. Moreover, the *Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill* includes a section on victims' issues. The Bill includes provisions that seek to:

- Pilot victim statements schemes;
- Give victims of certain crimes the right to be informed of the possible release of the offender from prison;
- Give victims of certain crimes the right to make representations before any decision to release the offender from prison is made, to be told of the impending release of the offender and about any special conditions attached to that release which concern them;
- Give the Police powers to pass information about victims to authorised victim support agencies.

404. In Scotland, there are currently 5 courthouses that have fixed facilities that enable vulnerable witnesses to give their evidence by live television link. There are also 9 sets of mobile equipment available which can be set up in the remaining court houses should vulnerable witnesses need to give their evidence by this method. There is also a project underway to introduce new technology into all courtrooms that will allow evidence to be delivered electronically. The Scottish Court Service has also refurbished 43 court buildings that now provide separate rooms for children and other vulnerable witnesses.

Wales

Domestic Violence And Violence against Women

405. Lead responsibility for the criminal aspects of domestic violence in England and Wales rests with the Home Office. The National Assembly for Wales does, however, have devolved responsibility for a number of cross-cutting issues, including health and social services and child protection. A multi-agency Working Group on Domestic Violence and Violence against Women in Wales has been set up to develop new initiatives to help reduce domestic violence and violence against women. A number of suggestions for new initiatives and pilot projects are currently being considered, including provision of a telephone helpline and a Guidance Manual on

Domestic Violence for schools. A comprehensive domestic violence strategy for Wales is also to be developed, and a Task Group is being set up to take this forward.

Support for victims of Domestic Violence

406. From April 2003, the level of Assembly Government funding for domestic violence projects has been increased to some £1.3 million per year. 11 projects are being supported, including core funding of £384,640 for the year 2003/04 to support the work of Welsh Women's Aid. On 1 April the Supporting People programme will also become operational in Wales. This programme provides a unified funding stream, initially through the Assembly Government, for people receiving support in all forms of supported housing, including housing for all people escaping domestic violence.

407. In February 2003, the Welsh Assembly Government hosted a major conference on domestic violence for policy makers from Wales, England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, which was organised as part of the 'Raising the Standards' Inter-Governmental initiative established in 2000. This aims to help address domestic violence throughout the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland by sharing information on policy initiatives, co-ordinating research and developing good practice to mutually raise the standards of services to victims. Topics covered at this conference included the effects of domestic violence on children, religion and alcohol, asylum seekers and forced marriages.

Publications

408. In October 2001, the Assembly launched an internet version of a domestic violence resource manual for health care professionals which gives staff throughout the health service up to date information on giving advice to victims of domestic violence. Hard copies of this have now been produced, and are being made available to health care professionals throughout Wales. The Assembly is also currently producing a model protocol, highlighting the child protection aspects of domestic abuse, which will be issued to all Area Child Protection Committees in Wales.

Refuge provision

409. There are 32 local groups subscribed to Welsh Women's Aid, running 40 refuges and 22 information centres between them. The National Assembly for Wales provides all core funding for Welsh Women's Aid, which amounts to £341,640 for the year 2002/03. This money supports their national team, which consists of 14 staff over 3 national offices.